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## **Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland**



# Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland 1707—1929

THE HASTIE LECTURES IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

BY THE

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## P R E F A C E.

THIS book is an expansion of five lectures delivered by me as Hastie Lecturer in Glasgow University. Time limits necessitated severe compression in the lectures when they were delivered; and in preparing them for publication, I have therefore expanded the five lectures into eleven chapters.

As originally planned, the lectures did not go beyond 1843. In the light of recent events, however, it is no longer possible to regard the Disruption as a terminal point in the church history of Scotland. I have accordingly added a twelfth chapter as an epilogue, in which I have sought to sketch, in rapid survey and broad outline, the history of the Church since 1843. If health and years are given me, I hope to write another volume on that interesting and difficult period.

This book deals with the Church of Scotland during a period of disunion and reunion. Neither disunion nor reunion was due to causes peculiar to Scotland; but national life ran strongly enough to give distinctively Scottish aspects to movements which were common to all Western Europe. The story is still instinct with fire; and many years



## *PREFACE.*

have still to elapse before Scottish Churchmen will be able to read it with impartiality or indifference. It is perhaps enough that we have now reached the point at which it is no longer possible to believe that one side was more in the right than the other, or that the level of spiritual life was higher in one party or type than in its rival.

Kind friends, who forbid me to give their names, have lightened the labour of preparing the book for the press and of proof-reading. To them my best thanks are due.

A. J. CAMPBELL.

GLASGOW,  
Whitsuntide, 1930.

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# Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY.

THE Scottish Reformation, which in its first stages showed marks of Lutheran influence, and which at a later date was so far in step with the movement in England that it used regularly the Second Prayer-Book of Edward VI, ultimately produced a national church of the Reformed or Calvinistic type. This result is usually attributed to the leadership of John Knox. His energies were perforce spent mainly on the task of overturning the old system; and this he did so thoroughly that the struggle with Rome had never to be fought again in Scotland. At his death the Reformed Church and its institutions were still somewhat inchoate. The direction in which Knox's mind moved may be seen in such documents as the *Scots Confession* and the *First Book of Discipline*. His ideas were the product of a large and far-seeing mind; and they have been capable of giving guidance to times utterly different from his. But their enduring influence has been due in no small degree to the fact that they were not worked out in practical detail in his own time. That task was left for smaller men. To Knox succeeded such men as Melville, Spottiswoode, Henderson, Sharp, Leighton, and Carstairs, none of whom, with the possible exception of Carstairs, can be described as leaders of the Church, but only as leaders of the factions which for the next

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century struggled with one another for mastery within the Church. Protestantism, delivered from the fear of Rome, fell to fighting with itself—"a drunken scuffle in the dark," as the welter was described by Leighton. The turmoil in Scotland was but the local phase of a conflict which went on in all the nations of Western Europe. The conflict was political as well as ecclesiastical, and it was part of the process of constituting a stable order of society to take the place of the system which the Reformation had destroyed.

For one thing, the Reformation brought to an end the authority of the Church in society. For many centuries it had been held almost as an axiom that the Church was by divine appointment the supreme law-giver, the final arbiter in all that pertained to individual or social life. The European society was one, and it was essentially a Church. At the Reformation this principle was completely swept away. In its place came the tendency to regard the territorial State as the fundamental unit in society. All jurisdiction centres in, and flows from, the secular authority, which may be a republic, as in Venice, or a despotic prince, as in the Tudor monarchy. Melancthon held that there was nothing more noble than the State. Luther, alarmed by the Peasants' Revolt and the Anabaptist movement, asserted the authority of the prince with remarkable emphasis. Henry VIII of England, in casting off the jurisdiction of the Pope, regarded himself as a secular Pope for the Church of England. Elizabeth, with somewhat longer experience of the import of the Reformation, used different language from her father; but her idea of the relation of the Church to the State was essentially the same as his. The political theories of Macchiavelli and Hobbes were the true offspring of a movement which overthrew the authority of the

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Church and put in its place the authority of the territorial State.

The Reformation accordingly produced a crop of national churches. Not that the idea of a national church was previously unknown; for in this, as in many other matters, the Reformation did not create a new conception so much as alter the emphasis on an old and accepted notion. Left to follow their own minds, the statesmen of the Reformation would have treated the Church as the creature of the State. The situation varied from State to State; but everywhere the tendency of the civil power was to assert its jurisdiction in matters ecclesiastical. If the Church exercised, or appeared to exercise, any legislative or administrative powers, as might be done, for example, by a Convocation or a General Assembly, it was because the civil authority had apportioned to the Church a certain area within which the Church might move freely. The Augsburg Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the English Prayer-Book, the documents of the Westminster Assembly of Divines all reveal that within the countries of the Reformation the civil authority had effectively asserted its supremacy in things ecclesiastical. Many, who devoted themselves wholly to the work of the Church, accepted the claims of the civil authority — some acquiescing in a fact which they were powerless to resist, others holding *ex animo* that the State is an ordinance of God.

In Scotland, as elsewhere, the claims of the civil authority were made and enforced. Even among the minor details of church life lay influence could dominate. In rural parishes the chancels, long the emblems of undisputed ecclesiastical authority, were often seized by the principal heritors for their own use. In the burghs the magistrates exercised, apparently

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without question, the right of issuing orders with regard even to the intimate concerns of the burgh churches. Discipline, which of all provinces of church life is most peculiarly the affair of the kirk-session, was of as much concern to magistrates as to elders; nor is it always easy to determine where the authority of the elder ends and the authority of the magistrate begins. As it was in localities, so was it in the general life of the nation. The Crown resisted with all its might every claim to autonomy put forward by the Church. The details of that conflict do not concern us here. It is sufficient to note that the claims of the Crown had for atmosphere the widespread tendency, created and fostered by the Reformation, to subordinate the ecclesiastical to the civil; and the tendency had the support of many who spent their days gladly in the service of the Church, and were not discernibly inferior in Christian attainment to those who took the opposite view.

The opposition to the claims of the Crown sprang partly from the spirit and genius of the Reformed Church, partly from the historical circumstances of the Scottish Reformation. The Reformed Church claimed for itself a right of self-government, which harmonised ill with the doctrine of the supreme authority of the State. The Church should be governed by the Church, the State by the Church and the State working together. The national church was the local representative of the catholic visible Church, and was therefore independent of the State. Both Church and State were ordinances of God, necessary to each other, and unable to function properly except in partnership. For her warrant the Church had the Holy Scriptures, which were the Word of God, and which were to be preached by duly accredited ministers for the convincing of the reason and the direction of the conscience; but the Word of

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God was also the guide of the magistrate, who must therefore give heed, and even obedience, to the pronouncements of the Church. In theory the provinces of Church and State were quite distinct. In reality they were apt to find themselves in frequent collision; and in practice there was no substantial difference between the political claims of Rome and those advanced by the Reformed Churches of Geneva, Holland, or Scotland. The strength of the Reformed Church lay in its system of ecclesiastical courts. The free discussion of weighty topics gave definite form to impulses and opinions which might otherwise have remained vague, developed the sense of responsibility, and strengthened the hands of leaders.

Revolutions leave their traces for centuries both on individuals and institutions: and the Scottish Reformation was a revolution. It was carried through in the face of unbending hostility from the constituted authorities in Church and State. It brought into being a new political force—sometimes described as the people of Scotland, though such a term is perhaps too wide for the organised body which called itself the Congregation of Jesus Christ. As the struggle went on, however, the spirit aroused by the Reformation penetrated further and further into the hearts of the nation: and in the age of the Covenants the ecclesiastical leaders had behind them a large popular following, drawn from all classes in the community, who understood the issues at stake and had learned how to give expression to their will. In England historical conditions enabled the new wine to be poured into old bottles without much damage, and the external framework of the Church remained much as it had been for centuries. In Scotland, on the other hand, the Reformation had to create its own institutions; and the Crown found itself confronted with



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a closely articulated system of ecclesiastical courts—conduits which carried into nearly every parish and burgh the stormy influences of the Supreme Court, the General Assembly. Church and State were co-extensive; and in the eyes of the Crown the General Assembly was not merely the chief governing body of the Church, but a powerful and dangerous rival for the allegiance of the nation. The rivalry was real—none the less real because the Assembly was accustomed to assert elaborately its loyalty to the person of the sovereign. It embodied tendencies which were subversive of monarchy as understood in that age. The main stream of national life ran through the General Assembly; for the constitution and procedure of the Scottish Parliament before the Revolution were such that it could be no effective counterpoise to the General Assembly. It is unnecessary to enquire how far the General Assembly was inspired by religious motives, how far by political. In such a period the two could not be disentangled. In England, the conflict was between King and Parliament: in Scotland, the same conflict was between King and General Assembly. We discover, therefore, that ecclesiastical leaders often found it necessary to undertake tasks which in England were usually undertaken by politicians. Nor are we surprised to find that James VI, Charles I., Cromwell, and Charles II—representing as they did in different fashions the tendency towards kingly absolutism—found that in Scotland the General Assembly was their principal antagonist. Each in his turn found it necessary to suppress it: and for two long periods—amounting together to nearly seventy years of the seventeenth century—the General Assembly did not meet. The long contention with the Crown created, however, a tradition, and bred habits of leadership and

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independence which went far to strengthen the tendency, innate in all branches of the Reformed Church, to assert the autonomy of the Church.

But the Church of Scotland was by no means of one mind. No one knew better than the Presbyterian chiefs that they could not command the support of all. The enthusiasm for the National Covenant was by no means universal; and in many cases some form of compulsion was necessary to obtain signatures. Montrose and Lauderdale both commenced on the side of the Covenants. They became leaders on the side of the Crown. Yet neither they, nor other opponents of the Covenanting policy, regarded themselves as outside the Church of Scotland. The thought had not yet taken shape that there could be more than one church within a nation. It was held that Church and Nation must always be co-extensive. If differences arose, the problem must be solved, not by the creation of rival sects, but by the suppression—forcible, if necessary—of the weaker by the stronger.

Side by side with the controversy between Church and Crown, and mingled with it, was the controversy between Episcopacy and Presbytery. It is difficult to arrive at any estimate of the strength of the two parties in Scotland. It is doubtful whether either party could claim the support of a majority in the nation — not because their strength was equal, but because a large number had no strong opinions on one side or the other. For the greater part of the period between the Reformation and the Revolution, the Church of Scotland was under the government of bishops; but the characteristic church courts of Presbytery, other than the General Assembly, continued to meet. But it has been the ill-fortune of episcopacy in Scotland to be allied—sometimes with its consent, sometimes against

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its will—with causes which were not at all to the mind of a considerable part of the Scottish people. Its system of church government was the counterpart of the government of the state in the days of kingly absolutism; and therefore bishops were more acceptable to the sovereign than presbyters, especially such as held the doctrines of Andrew Melville or the Covenanters. Episcopacy was, or tended to be, Erastian. In a country in which Parliament was little more than a court for registering the decrees of the Crown, episcopacy was associated with the policy of the Crown to repress the freedom of speech and action which presbytery fostered. One episcopate arose out of a merely legal necessity—to supply an estate in Parliament which would otherwise be lacking. Another episcopate was associated with the endeavour of Charles I and Laud to assimilate the Church of Scotland to the Church of England, and to bring about the change by the exercise of royal authority. Yet another episcopate—perhaps the most ill-starred of all—supplied Charles II with officials to carry out his policy. Not even the saintliness of Leighton could redeem it. Its representative man was Archbishop Sharp; and in the popular imagination it was, and still is, connected with the persecution of the Covenanters of the West, of which it was, if not the responsible agent, at least the willing instrument. An ecclesiastical system with such relationships had few friends in a time of crisis. When the Revolution came the popular feeling of the most tormented districts found expression in the “rabbling of the curates.” In less violent form, but with equally unmistakable emphasis, the Claim of Rights (1689) declared that Episcopacy was intolerable. “Prelacy and the superiority of any office in the Church above Presbyters is and hath been a great and

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“insupportable grievance to the Nation, and contrary  
“to the inclinations of the generality of the people ever  
“since the Reformation (they having been reformed  
“from popery by presbyters) and therefore ought to be  
“abolished.”

With the coming of William of Orange a new chapter opened in the history of the Crown and the Church. The Crown itself was changed. The doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, which had arisen out of the collapse of the medieval church, and which had been asserted with such determination by the Stuart kings, was put aside. Sovereignty resided henceforth, not in the person of the monarch, but in the nation; and the king held his office by the will of the nation. The will of the nation asserted itself also in the settlement of the Church. As may be seen from the quotation given above, the Claim of Rights took no higher ground in its demand for presbyterian church government than that it was in accordance with the will of the people. The Revolution Settlement incorporated the Church's Confession of Faith in a civil statute, and otherwise met all, or nearly all, the demands of the Presbyterians—so that it was clear beyond any doubt that presbyterian church government, and no other, was established within the Church of Scotland.

The Revolution Settlement marks an epoch in the history of the Church of Scotland. The stormy process which commenced in 1560 had now reached its conclusion. After a hundred and thirty years of controversy Scotland had at last succeeded in establishing a stable order of things in Church and State. In this she had been neither slower nor faster than the other nations of Western Europe; for the Scottish solution of the Reformation problem synchronised with the solutions reached elsewhere. So



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far as the Church was concerned, certain definite conclusions were attained. The national church was to be presbyterian, not episcopalian. Presbytery had been a complete failure in England, where it was in accord neither with the genius nor with the history of the English Church. But in Scotland, in spite of the long periods of episcopal administration, presbytery was in harmony with the historical experience of the nation. Subsequent centuries have proved the soundness of the decision taken at the Revolution. Since that date the Scottish Church has been much divided and subdivided; but each section has carried with it the presbyterian order, unaltered even in its minor details. Long periods of bitter estrangement have not brought about any divergence; and as often as estrangement has come to an end, and reconciliation has led to a corporate union of sects, the negotiating sects have found that each had maintained the presbyterian system and the presbyterian tradition intact.

For another thing, the Church had succeeded in defining its relation to the State. The definition was perhaps possible only because the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings was now laid on the shelf. No important political interest was affected by the claims of the Church; for after the Revolution, both in Scotland and England, ecclesiastical questions bulked less and less in the eyes of statesmen, and the energy, formerly expended on the concerns of the Church, was now devoted largely to questions of trade and commerce. But the Church had successfully asserted what the Stuart Kings so vigorously denied, and what Protestant Churches, other than the Reformed, had not always been greatly concerned with—that it was in possession of a life and a jurisdiction which were not the creation of any secular authority. To that assertion the

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Revolution Settlement set its seal. The Church found the marks of its identity in the Westminster Confession of Faith—"the publick and avowed confession of this church"—in presbyterian church government and discipline, and in the Act of 1592, which "ratified the liberty of the Trew Kirk"—all of which are specifically mentioned in the Act of 1690. The State accepted the Church's description of itself; and by embodying that acceptance in a statute of the realm, it recognised and secured the autonomy of the Church. The erastianism of the Episcopalians, the theocratic dreams of the Covenanters were alike discarded. The Revolution Settlement worked satisfactorily for more than two hundred years. It secured for the Church of Scotland a freedom such as no other Protestant Church has enjoyed—a freedom in which both the Church was protected against the State and the individual member of the Church was protected against tyrannical action on the part of church courts. The Revolution Settlement held its ground in spite of, perhaps because of, other endeavours which were made in Scotland to find a true relation between Church and State. In later chapters we shall see how circumstances arose, and ideas took shape, which it was impossible to foresee in 1690; and the epoch, which began with the Revolution Settlement, came to an end in the equally far-reaching legislation of 1921 and 1925.

After the Revolution the Church proceeded with the necessary work of re-constructing its shattered fabric. "A calm and peaceable procedure," wrote William, "will be no less pleasing to us than it becometh you. We never could be of the mind that violence was suited to the advancing of true religion, nor do we intend that our authority shall ever be a tool to the irregular passions of any party. Moderation is what religion

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enjoins, neighbouring churches expect from you, and we recommend to you." For some time it looked as if the King's wise words were to be in vain. Many of the victorious Presbyterians had been long under the harrow, and their temper was vindictive. But the spirit of the time was against them. It has sometimes been maintained that the more genial spirit, which gradually leavened the Church, came in with those Episcopalian ministers who conformed at the Revolution and remained in their parishes; and certainly there were some of whom it might be said that they formed the bridge over which the gentle and conciliatory piety of Forbes and Leighton passed into the Presbyterian Church. But there is no real foundation for such a statement. Not all Presbyterians were narrow and bitter—whereof there is no better testimony than the fact that all through the reigns of William and Anne they accepted as their leader and representative a man of calm and tolerant spirit such as William Carstairs. How the harsher spirit could on occasion seize the reins may be read in the deplorable story of Aikenhead (1696). It is possible also that the heresiarch of the Bourignian heresy (1704) suffered more because he had been an Episcopalian than because he was a Bourignian. But when we remember the long bitterness which had preceded the Revolution, we may fairly say that, with the guidance of Carstairs and under the influence of the times, the General Assembly was quick in learning the lesson of moderation which William had urged.

The Union of 1707 did not alter the religious situation in Scotland. Like most Scotsmen, the Church viewed its coming with dislike; and all the influence of Carstairs had to be exerted to prevent the Church from becoming an active antagonist. The Church was apprehensive of evil at the hands of the Church of

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England—a powerful, prelatic institution which might undo all that the Presbyterians of Scotland had so toilsomely achieved. An Act of Security disarmed the fears of the Church of Scotland, and preserved the Revolution Settlement. The first oath taken by a British sovereign on accession was to be an oath to maintain the government, worship, discipline, rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland. The security given to the Church did not make the Union more popular; and for many years it was regarded as the cause of innumerable ills. Queen Anne's suggestion for a national thanksgiving met with no response; and the General Assembly of 1708 proceeded to business without the slightest reference to the Union or to the important ecclesiastical legislation which had accompanied it.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CHURCH AND THE NEW AGE.

No event in the history of Scotland has had greater consequences for the nation than the Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland in 1707. It is the key to Scottish history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Losing her separate political existence, but preserving her national spirit and certain national institutions in which that spirit was enshrined, Scotland was merged in a single commonwealth with a richer and more populous nation; and everything that has happened in Scotland since 1707 has been determined by that fact in its time of happening, in its mode of happening, in its tendency and results. It had few friends in Scotland. It was carried through in an atmosphere of turbulence. It was the source of all grievances, the target of all resentments; and more than once there was some considerable talk of bringing it to an end. The Church, as has been said, viewed the negotiations with misgiving. When the Union was accomplished and the affairs of Scotland were administered from Westminster, it seemed as if the fears of the Church had been justified. Parliament seemed to know nothing and to care nothing about Scotland. One act was passed after another without the slightest regard for the sentiments or interests of the Church of Scotland; and it seemed as if all the securities of the Treaty of Union had been in vain.

But in spite of discontents and murmuring the Union remained. "It was formed," said Defoe, "by the nature of things." The hatreds, which converged upon

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it from many sides, were not sufficient to provoke the two nations into a dissolution of partnership. So the Jacobites discovered, somewhat to their surprise, in the rising of 1715. They made a strong appeal to the national feeling of the Scots; but their appeal proved vain in face of the firm loyalty of the Church to the house of Hanover and the Protestant succession. The Union broke down the tariff walls which separated Scotland from England, and gave an opportunity to Scottish trade which it would otherwise have had great difficulty in obtaining. Scottish traders found an entrance to the English and colonial markets, and Scottish shipping obtained the benefit of the English Navigation Acts. Two nations, which for all their traditional rivalry, had many affinities of race, language, and temperament, now became one state, one fiscal and legislative unit. At first, Scotland could take little advantage of the new opportunities on account of her poverty; and twenty years after the Union the advance was still too slight to make much impression. But little by little, and gathering impetus as they went, the new conditions made themselves felt. The later days of George II proved to be one of the greatest periods of British expansion; and by that time Scotland was able to take her part in the making and growth of the British Empire. The Union of the Parliaments brought to an end the separate political existence of Scotland: and by all the canons of history she should no longer have counted among the nations. But instead of disappearing, the national life of Scotland broke out in a richer efflorescence than ever. The greater part of Scotland's contribution to human progress was made after 1707, and in consequence of the Union.

A hundred writers have told, in whole or in part, the wonderful tale of the material development of Scotland

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in the eighteenth century. The greater part of that tale belongs to the second half of the century. But the seeds were sown in the first half, during which the mind of the Scottish people received the bent which made possible the achievements of the later period. Wodrow, an interesting, laborious, lachrymose, and sometimes unconsciously humorous historian, lamented in the early days of the century that in consequence of the Union "trade is put in the room of religion." There spoke the characteristic voice of Puritanism, ever suspicious of any activity which is not professedly religious. A wider mind observes with delight the evidences of vital energy which the story of the period reveals. How from being almost the worst in Europe Scottish agriculture became almost the best; how the treeless country was clothed with timber; how the linen manufacture became the chief interest, and almost the ruling passion, in every home between Orkney and the Solway; how the long neglected fisheries of the Scottish seas awoke into life and prosperity; how the thread industry of Paisley sprang up; how the insignificant hamlet of Greenock grew to a great sea-port; how the decaying burgh of Glasgow became the centre of the greatest tobacco trade in the world; how after the ruin of its tobacco trade it turned to manufactures, and rose to the second and finally the first place among Scottish towns; how the Carron Iron Works came into being; how the Clyde was deepened and the Forth and Clyde Canal was dug; how James Watt invented the steam-engine and Henry Bell inaugurated the age of steamships; how at last the Industrial Revolution came and filled the Lowlands with chimney stalks—all this, and more than this, has been set forth in abundant detail by a multitude of writers whose works are within easy reach. Even if there were nothing to tell concerning

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Scotland in the eighteenth century but its tale of material development, that tale would be worth telling; and it may be doubted whether in the record of any unit of the British Commonwealth there is a parallel to the swift rise of Scotland in a few decades from penury and insignificance to importance and wealth.

With commercial enterprise and industrial progress came also enterprise and progress in the higher interests of human life. "It is an admirable result of the progress of the human spirit," said Voltaire, "that at the present time it is from Scotland we receive rules of taste in all the arts from poetry to gardening." A sarcasm—the point of which is that it was prosaically true. Scotland was the last country in Europe from which such things could have been expected. Its previous record—if there were any beyond its borders who were sufficiently interested to take note of it—showed it a poor, barren and turbulent country, lying well out of the highway of European history, engaged for part of its time in desperate struggles to maintain its separate existence against a rich and pugnacious neighbour, and for the rest plague-stricken with feuds and broils between rival houses, rival factions, and rival sects. Suddenly it stepped forth into the noonday as the fruitful mother of learning and the arts. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Scotland produced a remarkable succession of men of note, many of whom gave original and creative contributions to the cultural progress of Europe. It is sufficient to mention such names as David Hume and Thomas Reid in philosophy, William Robertson and Adam Ferguson in history, Adam Smith in economics, Hugh Blair in literary criticism, Tobias Smollett in fiction, James Thomson and James Macpherson in poetry, the brothers Adam in architecture, James Watt



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in engineering, Cullen in medicine, Raeburn in painting, Jeffrey in journalism, James Boswell and John Gibson Lockhart in biography, Thomas Chalmers in oratory, to see in how many splendid fashions Scotsmen broke new ground. During this period Burns and Scott lived and flourished, those two superb embodiments of the Scottish spirit, so different in outlook, method, and achievement, yet each so racy of the soil, than whom no sons of Scotland left a deeper impress upon the thought and imagination of Europe. Much of what was written then has long lost its savour. Books, which at the time won for their authors wide and deserved applause, are now utterly forgotten, and will never be read again. They fulfilled their purpose when they gave an impulse to their times, and prepared the way for greater things which without them would have been impossible.

But in the early decades of the period the splendours of the future were still below the horizon. The country was miserably poor with a poverty which seemed to be irremediable, and which tended to destroy all vigour of life and thought. For more than four centuries there had been almost continuous strife in Scotland, save for two or three brief moments of sunshine. Conditions in Scotland were perhaps not greatly worse than in England, and were probably much better than in Germany or France. But a contemporary observer, Fletcher of Saltoun, estimated that out of a population of not more than a million and a half no fewer than 200,000 were in a condition of mendicancy. The long poverty of Scotland had been aggravated by recent experience. Practically the whole available capital of the country was invested in the Darien Scheme with an enthusiasm which recalled the days of the National Covenant; and it all perished utterly. The towns of

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Scotland were poor and mean. Glasgow, Aberdeen, Ayr, Dumfries, Dundee, Burntisland, Dunfermline, much the same tale is told of them all—stagnant trade, declining population, deserted houses, squalid conditions. Even Edinburgh, the only town of size, was without prosperity; and any material advantage, which she had as the seat of government, disappeared when the Union swept the Parliament away, and taught nobles and commoners to think more of London. The rural areas, in which the bulk of the people lived, were in as evil a case as the towns. Scottish agriculture of the period can be fittingly described as barbarous. Its practice was determined by unalterable traditions, much mingled with superstition; and when improvements were at last attempted, they were often opposed bitterly as being sacrilegious. Rents were high; yet the lairds seemed to be as poor as their tenants. As the seventeenth century passed over into the eighteenth, there fell upon the country a long succession of bad harvests—if harvest it can be called when year after year the grain never ripened at all. It was a period long remembered in Scotland—a period of famine, pestilence, and death. One source of wealth there was, of which something might have been made, if the deep poverty of the country had not made it impossible to procure the necessary equipment—the inexhaustible fisheries of the Scottish seas. A little was done in the Firth of Forth. But the richest harvests were in the northern waters, and these were left almost undisturbed to the Dutch, who spoke truly when they called the Shetland fishery their “gold-mine.”

Such things must be kept in mind if we are to understand the work of the Church of Scotland. Everything in the circumstances of the times conspired to discourage personal enterprise, and to create an

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atmosphere of gloom and hopelessness; and the temper of the people inevitably reacted upon the life of the Church. During the seventeenth century Scottish religion had fallen greatly under the influence of English Puritanism; and when to this we add the memory of the bitter strife of sixty years, and the economic misery of the moment, we can perhaps understand why at the Union, and for many years after, religion was seen in its grimmest form. Scottish religion depicted God as an implacable despot, swift to wrath, on whom His servants must wait with unremitting devotion, lest His anger break forth and smite them.<sup>1</sup> It held by the doctrines of election and reprobation in all their severity—doctrines which taught that Christ died only for the elect, and that all the rest of mankind lay without hope of remedy under the wrath of God. Both in church and in home the most relentless discipline was maintained; for even the heedless laughter of children might bring down a judgment from heaven. The observance of the Sabbath was enforced with penalties. All other sacred times and seasons were deliberately ignored; and great was the indignation when in 1712 Parliament established, or rather restored, the “Yule Vacance” or Christmas recess of the Court of Session. Such a religion could be content with the hideous and ill-kept churches of the period, in which the meanness of the building and its furnishings was in keeping with the degradation of the ritual.

But the diligent hearing of sermons was not sufficient to overcome the fears and credulity of the natural man. The ecclesiastical authorities set themselves to suppress all superstitious observances; but in superstitious.

<sup>1</sup> Boston, *Fourfold State* (ed. 1824), p. 273. “Remember, I pray you, this is a very ill-chosen time to live at a distance from God. It is a time when Divine Providence frowns upon the land we live in; the clouds of wrath are gathering and thick above our heads.”

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beliefs they could themselves share, for some of those beliefs were regarded as marks of piety. The prince of darkness was everywhere present. Anything untoward, for which a more enlightened age would find a simple explanation, was attributed to the direct intervention of Satan—a mysterious sound, an unexpected ailment, a contrary wind, a spasm of doubt. Out of this credulity had sprung the practice of witch-hunting, a practice by no means confined to Scotland, the story of which is perhaps the most dreadful chapter in Scottish social history. Civil and ecclesiastical authorities united in the persecution of witches; and the persecution was usually characterised by deliberate and ghastly cruelty. By the date of the Union the fever of witch-hunting was beginning to lessen; but the dread of witchcraft lingered long, and the rise of a humaner spirit was regarded by the strict as a sign of moral and religious degeneracy.

The pious imagination loved to revel in the thought of death and the last things. Boston's *Fourfold State* affords a good illustration. Thomas Boston (1676-1732) was minister of Simprin in the Merse, and afterwards of Ettrick; and it is interesting to note that he was settled in Ettrick on the very day on which the Union came into force. He belonged to the stricter school. Of his piety, his sincerity, his diligence, and his power there can be no doubt. Devout worshippers were willing to travel forty miles to hear him preach; and his works were held in reverence and esteem for a hundred years and more by those who were like-minded with him. Compared with many of his contemporaries, his language was restrained. Yet nearly half of the *Fourfold State* is taken up with a vivid and detailed description of the state of man at and after death, the death-bed, the Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the

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bliss of Heaven and the pains of Hell.<sup>2</sup> Other preachers let themselves go more than Boston. Horror can be attractive; and many of the popular preachers of the day exploited it to the full.

The worship of the Church centred then, as at all times, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Those were the days of the great sacramental pilgrimages, which afterwards became a source of much evil, and were soundly and deservedly satirised by Burns. At the time of the Union they were perhaps at their best, and had undoubted influence upon the religious life and ecclesiastical history of the period. The "Great Work"—so it was often called—was not regarded as a parochial celebration. When it was announced that it was to take place on some summer Sunday, the neighbouring parishes shut their churches, and trooped off, ministers and people, to the "Occasion." Thus, although in any given parish the Lord's Supper was celebrated only once a year, and perhaps only once in a series of years, the whole countryside was at communion every Sunday during the summer months: and preachers had sometimes to warn their hearers against the excitement generated by "running from Sacrament to Sacrament." We read of great crowds gathering in this or that parish—1000, 1400, 2000, even 10000 coming together to a parish of which the whole population might be less than a thousand. The

<sup>2</sup> Boston, *op. cit.*, p. 447. "Consider, I pray you, (1) How uneasy it is to be one whole night on a soft bed in perfect health, when one fain would have a sleep, but cannot get it, sleep being departed from him! How often will one in that case wish for rest! How full of tossings to and fro! But ah! how dreadful must it be to lie in sorrow, wrapt up in scorching flames through long eternity, in that place where they have no rest day or night.

"(2) How terrible would it be to live under the violent pains of the colic or gravel for forty or sixty years together, without any intermission! Yet that is but a small thing in comparison of eternal separation from God, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched."

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parish was often in much perplexity over the accommodation of such multitudes; for the gathering went on from Thursday to Monday. It is easy to understand also how the custom interfered with agriculture, a point of importance at a later period when agriculture was beginning to improve. But in the days of their excellence the Communion gatherings were impressive and moving. They gave opportunities for the devout to become acquainted with one another, and to discuss the affairs of the Church; and ministers thus became known and influential over considerable areas who would otherwise have had little fame beyond their own parishes.

Closely connected with those sacramental gatherings were the Praying Societies, which it is necessary to mention, because they were the seed-plot of important movements. The Praying Society was a Scottish form of a phenomenon which is to be found in some form in every church. Such societies had existed here and there since the Reformation. Under the stress of the Covenanting period they increased greatly in number; and for those who refused to accept the Revolution Settlement the Society was for long the normal unit of church life. Praying Societies were, however, to be found in considerable numbers among those who accepted the Settlement. They met fortnightly or monthly for prayer and conference. Neighbouring societies grouped themselves into Associations and Correspondences; and thus considerable areas were covered with a network of vigorous religious activity which had little direct contact with the courts of the Church.

In spite of its ardour, the religion of the Praying Society was as a rule rigidly conservative. It held firmly by the doctrinal system of the Westminster

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Confession of Faith; it abhorred all innovations; and it stood for the ecclesiastical principles of the Covenant. There was good reason for the fear of conservative minds. The new age brought with it a new spirit; and its influence was percolating rapidly, to the dismay of those who preferred the old paths. The Covenants, which once meant so much, were passing into oblivion. Even in the day of their triumph they had never been unanimously accepted. The circumstances, which gave rise to them, had now passed away. They were disappearing, not because their enemies had won a victory over them, but because an increasing number of churchmen were entirely indifferent to them. There are questions which provoke much debate, but to which no answer is ever given, because the time comes when nobody cares whether they are answered or not. So it was with the Covenants. Once they could set armies in line of battle; the time came when they provoked only a yawn.

The truth is that the Covenants belonged to an order of things which had become intolerable, not only in Scotland, but throughout Western Europe. Seventeenth century religion was an interest of State. Outward conformity in religion was a civic as well as an ecclesiastical duty; and the smallest deviation might be dangerous to the civil and ecclesiastical unity, and must therefore be checked, and, if need be, severely punished. The Wars of Religion in France, the 'Thirty Years' War in Germany, the Civil Wars in England, the Covenanting struggles in Scotland — all these were but local phases of the general tendency to treat religion as mainly an affair of State. Even the domestic controversies of the Church were informed by the same idea. The interminable debates between Protestant and Roman, between Episcopalian,

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Presbyterian, and Independent, all sprang in the last resort from the conception of religion as a political interest. In the process of contention the rival theories became each as elaborate, as mail-clad as the other. The Reformation began as the revolt of the conscience against a highly centralised system; but it shared the fate that lies in ambush for all great movements of the spirit, and it was in danger of losing its soul among the institutions which it created. The rival theories, being in reality much more nearly akin than their adherents supposed, fought each other to exhaustion; and the day was at last won, not by either of the antagonists, but by a *tertium quid*, with affinities to neither and antipathies to both.

- The origins of the new spirit may be traced far back among the philosophical disputations of the Middle Ages: but its proximate source was the atmosphere created by the rise of modern philosophy and science. Newton's *Principia* (1687), itself a final step in a long process, went far to change men's outlook on the universe. His statement on the law of gravitation revealed the universe as a realm of law, not a theatre of capricious divine interposition. Francis Bacon had excluded theology from his consideration, because it lay beyond the province of human reason; but other philosophers had none of his hesitation, and made haste to subject religious belief to the same method as they applied to all other questions of knowing and being. The idea of universal law was accepted all over Europe; and it was held that the same mathematical method which obtained demonstrable results in physical science was valid also for religion and ethics. Ecclesiastical authority and historical tradition might no longer claim the last word, and all principles of belief and conduct must vindicate themselves at the bar of reason.



Rationalism was accordingly the dominating movement of the eighteenth century. It affected everything—literature, politics, philosophy, religion; and of those who regarded themselves as at war with it, many accepted its premisses and spoke in its language. No church was free from it, though no church was wholly conquered by it. The Roman Church had its Jansenists; France had its Encyclopædists, Germany its *Aufklärung*, England its Deists and its Latitudinarians, Scotland its Moderates. Springing from Descartes, the Rationalist movement produced a long line of philosophers, among whom such names as Spinoza, Leibnitz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume stand out above the others like the peaks of a mountain range. Their conclusions were startling. In re-examining the foundations of belief, they seemed to undermine Christianity; and Hume, the boldest of all, seemed to deny even the possibility of knowledge. The English Deists represent an endeavour to save the Christian religion by rejecting the supernatural, and treating it as a non-mysterious, natural, rational system of morality. Butler replied to the Deists in the *Analogy*—a great work, which reveals its author as truly a child of his time. Moralists, influenced by the prevailing spirit, no longer regarded morality as consisting essentially in the obedience of a dutiful subject to the statutes of an Almighty Sovereign, and reduced all ethics to the working of some innate principle, self-love, for example, or benevolence, or the moral sense. Far down in the century, the watchwords of the age of Reason appeared in a state document like the American Constitution, and awakened echoes among the labyrinthine processes of the French Revolution.

In Scotland the age of Reason produced Moderatism—a movement interesting both in itself and by reason of

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its permanent influence on the life and history of the Church of Scotland. The origin of the name is to be found in King William's message to the General Assembly of 1690—"Moderation is what religion requires, neighbouring churches expect from you, and we recommend to you." For over a century it swayed the life and councils of the Church. Besides its root in the Rationalism of the period, Moderatism had a root in Scottish history. It was a temper rather than a system, and had affinities with the humanism of the Renaissance, represented in Scotland by such men as George Buchanan or Erskine of Dun. During the seventeenth century, in spite of its political religion and its violent polemics, there were those who held that the things which make for peace might be of greater value than the strife of contending parties. Such a man was John Durie, journeying vainly but with unwearying hope from court to court, from camp to camp, in the belief that, even though European religion had fallen to blows, it was still possible to find some basis for unity, some room for mutual forbearance and Christian love. Such too was John Forbes of Corse, founder and first occupant of the Chair of Divinity in King's College, and one of the greatest theologians whom the Church of Scotland has produced. Such above all was Bishop Leighton, "of all our ecclesiastical men the one whom all parties acknowledge as a saint." "As for you," he said to the students of Edinburgh, "especially those of you who intend to devote yourselves to theological studies, it is my earnest exhortation to you that you avoid, as you would the plague, that itch for polemical and controversial theology, which is so prevalent and infectious, and which, if any science deserves the name, may be truly termed 'science falsely so-called.'" Moderatism in its day of power was not always mindful

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of its origins; but it never wholly lost the dignity, the largeness of heart, the forbearance which were characteristic of its best men and its best periods, and which link it to many of the nobler souls of Scottish Church history.

Like Moderatism, the Scottish Evangelicalism of the eighteenth century had affinities with England and the Continent. Here, too, was a protest against political religion, and an emphatic assertion that religion has its seat and being in the "inward parts." But while Rationalism relied almost wholly upon the reason, its rival appealed chiefly to the emotions. In spite of a somewhat rigid orthodoxy, perhaps because of it, it distrusted the reason, and looked askance at learning and art. Its erudition, which within its limits was very considerable, was confined to the exposition of its dogmatic system; and to depart from that system, or even to criticise it, might entail everlasting death. Its judgments upon those who did not accept its standards were fiercely censorious; and its characteristic documents are usually abusive. On the other hand, it was a religion of courage, intensity, and tenacity; and its spirit was unceasingly propagandist.

From the same root sprang the Pietism of Germany, a remarkable spiritual development, which at one time bade fair to work a healthy reformation in a land where the Lutheran fervour had grown very cold. From this root sprang also the tireless missionary labours of the Moravian Brethren. Greatest of all its fruits, however, were Whitefield and Wesley, the apostles of eighteenth-century England. Their influence was felt in every region of the national life. At a later date their work produced the English Evangelicals, with their missionary zeal, their intense, if unenlightened, love of the Bible, and their interesting record of humanitarian

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service. In Scotland, at the opening of the eighteenth century, this spirit was distinguishable from the spirit of the Covenants, and so far as it was distinguishable had, as we shall see, certain aspects which were somewhat disquieting. At a later date it could be fairly called an alternative version of Moderatism; and when at last it became dominant in the Church of Scotland, it was plain that Scottish Evangelicalism had drunk deep of the well of Whitefield and, to a certain extent, of Wesley, and was greatly influenced by the parallel movement in England.

### CHAPTER III.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

IN 1709 James Greenshields, an Episcopalian minister, settled in Edinburgh and formed a congregation, mostly of English residents, in which he used the English prayer-book. In spite of the Act of Security Presbyterians had fears of Anglican influence; and Greenshields' action excited much anger. The Presbytery of Edinburgh summoned him to its bar; but he came only to decline its jurisdiction. The Presbytery asserted its jurisdiction, found him guilty, and forbade him to exercise the functions of the Ministry. The execution of this judgment fell to the magistrates of the city, who were of one mind with the Presbytery; and on Greenshields' refusal to desist from his practices, they committed him to the Tolbooth. The judgment of the magistrates was confirmed by the Court of Session; but Greenshields appealed to the House of Lords, and was successful (1710).

Two years later, in 1712, partly as a consequence of this case, partly through the political influence of the Jacobites, an Act of Toleration was passed, in spite of the opposition of the Church of Scotland, to protect Scottish Episcopalians in the exercise of their worship. It declared that it should be "free and lawful" for Episcopalians to assemble for divine service in any place which they might choose, except parish churches, and pronounced penalties against any who should in any way disturb them. All magistrates were to give them "all manner of protection, aid, and assistance." In

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the original draft of the bill a clause exempted all non-Presbyterians from the jurisdiction of the Church courts; but to meet the plea that any such enactment would probably undermine Church discipline, the clause was altered to provide that no civil pain or disability of any kind should follow a sentence of excommunication. The Act also imposed upon both Presbyterian and Episcopalian ministers an oath declaring fidelity to the sovereign, and abjuring the Pretender.

Controversy awoke within the Church over the oath. In the eyes of the more scrupulous the civil magistrate was encroaching upon the liberties of the Church; and they spoke with much bitterness of those whose conscience was not troubled.<sup>1</sup> The controversy was of small moment save in so far as it indicated the rise of divergent parties within the Church. The Act itself, like the English Act of 1689, protected religious beliefs which had hitherto been without legal protection; and it perhaps indicates the first emergence of a virtue which Episcopalians and Covenanters had hitherto regarded as a vice. Long after 1712 those who gloried in the Covenanting tradition thundered against toleration.<sup>2</sup> More important, by obtaining the Toleration Act the Scottish Episcopalians had done what the Quakers and the Puritan Nonconformists had done in England, what the Romanists were later to do in Ireland. They had

<sup>1</sup> *Act 8, Ass. 1714.* "The exhortations contained in the foresaid Act 6, Ass. 1713 are renewed: and all ministers and people are seriously obtested to lay to heart the important duties therein recommended, and that there be no distinguishing course taken contrary thereto on the occasion of celebrating the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which ought to be the bond of love and unity among christians."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Judicial Testimony*, 1736. "In the year 1712 an almost boundless toleration is granted, by which the government and discipline of this church were exceedingly weakened . . . . Tolerations of this kind are contrary to the word of God."

asserted successfully their right to exist as a separate ecclesiastical community. Clearly the Reformation idea of a national church, as formulated in Scotland,<sup>3</sup> was beginning to crumble. Instead of the Church men now learn to speak of the Churches. Side by side, within one commonwealth and diffused throughout it, there may exist two, three, five, many distinct communities, each claiming to be truly a church, each maintaining its own "jurisdiction" among its own members, and emitting its "testimony"; and the unity of the Church—for in spite of mutually destructive propaganda that Note of the Church cannot be permanently forgotten—is declared to exist in spite of, or even because of, the plurality of organised denominations. For a time the denominations act according to the law of the jungle, and each wages a holy war of extermination against its rivals. But no such extermination ever follows; and in the end the warring sects agree to live in peace, each speaking eloquently of its "contribution" to the general life of the Church, and thereby indicating its own inner belief or fear that there is no further justification for its separate existence.

The new conception brings much perplexity to the civil magistrate. Toleration has been granted; but instead of solving, it only increases the problems of the State. Over and over again the courts of law find themselves in presence of a fact for which the law seems unable to make provision, and endeavour to find room within the law of contract for a relationship which the

<sup>3</sup> "Declairis the foresaid Kirk to be *the only true and halie Kirk* of Jesus Christ within this realme." Act, *Scots Parl.* 1567, c. 6.

"Declairis that there is *na uther face of Kirk*, nor uther face of religion then is presentlie be the favour of God established within this realme, and that there be *na uther jurisdiction ecclesiasticall* acknowledged within this realme uther then that quhilk is and sall be within the samin Kirk, or that quhilk flowis therefra." Act, *Scots Parl.* 1579, c. 69.

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churches declare to be founded, not on contract, but on conscience toward God. The new conception brings perplexity also to the churches. They have to justify their separate existence both to their own members and to the world at large. They have to determine the practical import of such words as freedom, principle, continuity, or change, in relation to their doctrines, governments, and methods of procedure. The national church, glorying in its nationality, at last works out a new interpretation of the word "national," which differs much from earlier meanings; and the other churches find themselves under a constant necessity of revising the formulæ by which they define their relation to the civil magistrate. The eighteenth century was old, and the denominations were numerous, before such matters were widely or passionately debated. But the Toleration Act was the first sign that the weather was changing.

The year 1712 brought also the Act which restored lay patronage in Scotland. Like the Toleration Act, it was the work of the Jacobites, who desired nothing better than to embarrass the Church of Scotland, and who were so far successful in their desires that they secured a measure which remained on the statute-book for one hundred and sixty years and was the parent of many grievous ills. Of this, however, it will be more convenient to speak in a later chapter.

The fruits of the Union ripened very slowly. With the slender beginnings of industry came also the re-awakening of Scottish literature; and the new atmosphere reacted upon the Church. We hear of a new style of preaching—not popular indeed among the people of the Church, but sufficiently prevalent to arouse the bitter anger of the straiter sect. It was of a milder, more humane type than the uncouth and fiery harangues



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of the older school. It spoke less of doctrine and more of ethics; and therefore its critics tilted at it for its "heathen" morality, for putting a crude and shallow philosophy in place of the gospel — "gospel" being synonymous with Calvinistic theology as systematised during the seventeenth century. The preachers of the new school have "so far discarded all the peculiar and supernatural doctrines of the gospel," say the Secession Fathers, "that one would scarce know by their discourses whether they were so much as professed Christians." Even their mannerisms did not escape condemnation — their gestures, their accent, their intonation—though it may be added that in these things the straiter sect had a most strict code of rules or accepted conventions of their own, to depart from which was to arouse a suspicion of ungodliness. The proceedings of the General Assembly and the records of subordinate church courts did not, it is true, suggest any widespread defection from the traditional austerity. But at all the Universities there were powerful influences at work which tended to strengthen the new ideas at the expense of the old.

For some fifteen years the Church was agitated by the "heresies" of John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, and by the teaching of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The cases affected different sections of the Church; but both marked a tendency to depart from the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Neither the book nor the professor bore the stamp of greatness; and except as an evidence of contemporary tendencies, neither case retains any permanent interest. Simson was the hero of two cases — 1714-17 and 1726-29. By the time he came on the stage, he was past middle life: and his health seems not to have been robust. He had been a student at Edinburgh, Glasgow,

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and Leyden; and after a brief ministry in the parish of Traquair, he was in 1708 appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow. He was a man of considerable learning and subtle intellect, but without enthusiasm, and somewhat deficient in moral force. In his own university and presbytery he was well liked. Simson had the sympathies of a considerable section of the Church. These did not necessarily accept his conclusions, which Simson himself spoke of as "hypotheses"; but they were opposed to the punitive zeal of the straiter sect, and breathed the milder and more humane spirit of the period. In his first case Simson was found guilty of a somewhat miscellaneous group of censurable "hypotheses," which his opponents called "gross errors and heresies contrary to the Divine Word." To maintain, or to be credited with maintaining, that no covenant, properly so called, was made with Adam, that sin was not necessarily propagated through Adam, that the number of the elect was probably greater than the number of the non-elect, that the primary motive of the religious life is the hope of happiness, was clearly to invite the wrath of the Calvinists. To the dismay of some, the Assembly after long and painstaking investigation let Simson off with an admonition; and professors were warned against following the bad lead which he had given. The second case struck deeper. Simson, influenced perhaps by the writing of Samuel Clarke, had emitted statements which could be described as Arian. The process of investigation and trial was again protracted. At one stage in the proceedings the General Assembly sent the matter down to presbyteries for their opinion — an interesting procedure, showing that the law and practice of the Church were still fluid. The cry was loud that deposition was the only possible penalty for such grave

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errors. But a sentence of that sort would have raised a controversy on jurisdiction with the University of Glasgow. Deposition from the ministry would have made Simson incapable of holding his chair; and the University was not minded to allow that the General Assembly could take a hand in maintaining academic discipline. In the end the General Assembly was content with a sentence of suspension. Simson retained his status and his emoluments, but could no longer be entrusted with the teaching of the Church's students.

The story of the Simson cases has to be read in documents of portentous length and dulness. Such interest as the reader can find in them lies partly in the theological debates and the evidence which they give of the undoubted learning of the Scottish clergy of the period, and partly in the judicial methods which were employed. It is even possible to extract a certain human interest from the weary proceedings — the thunders and rage of the severely orthodox Webster of Edinburgh, the comments of Wodrow, who belonged to the same side as Webster, but was torn between personal feeling for an old acquaintance and hatred for his new-fangled latitudinarianism, the strongly expressed opinions of that redoubtable champion of orthodoxy, the notorious Erskine of Grange, the evidence of students doing their best to remember lectures heard years before and delivered in Latin, and the character of Simson himself, subtly arguing with his judges, hardly troubling to hide his intellectual scorn for them, and at last collapsing ignominiously when he found that the day was going against him.

While other University principals showed their sympathy with Simson, Principal Hadow of St. Andrews was prominent against him. He was also the leader of the General Assembly against the *Marrow of Modern*

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*Divinity*—a case which caused no small stir in the interval between the Simson cases. The straiter sect, known at different times and to different speakers as the Wild, the High-Flyers, or the Evangelicals, held professedly to the strict orthodoxy of the Westminster Confession. Nevertheless, even in them the new age had wrought a subtle change; and their opponents — probably with justice—detected in them a tendency to Antinomianism. In 1717 the General Assembly had to deal with the “Auchterarder Creed.” In its zeal for sound doctrine the Presbytery of Auchterarder added to the questions prescribed by the laws of the Church to be put to the candidates for licence, and thereby took upon itself a right which belongs to the General Assembly alone. The Presbytery required a candidate to declare that it was “not sound or orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ and installing us in covenant with God.” The Presbytery was taken to task both for invading the functions of the General Assembly, and for drafting a formula so “unsound and debatable”; but it was able to prove to the satisfaction of its superiors that its doctrine was sound and that no heresy was intended, though it had made use of words so “unwarrantable and exceptionable.” The debates on the “Auchterarder Creed” prompted the publication of a Scottish edition of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a book which but for Principal Hadow would have gently reached its appropriate fate. It was first published in 1645, the work of Edward Fisher of Brasenose; and under the form of a dialogue, full of antithetical sentences and wire-drawn distinctions, it gave a summary of the Federal Theology and an exposition of the Moral Law. Those who condemned the *Marrow*—as Principal Hadow had done in a sermon—were hard put to it to

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find any express deviation from the standards of the Church; but they had an uneasy suspicion that the book and its supporters were somewhat infected with Antinomianism, a danger which often accompanies a well-known type of emotional piety.

But under the guidance of its safe and conventional leaders, the General Assembly of 1720 adopted tactics than which none could have been more futile. It condemned the book, and enjoined ministers to warn their people against it—a sure way to make it better known than ever.<sup>4</sup> An Act was passed at the same time on the preaching of “catechetical doctrine.” Against this Act Evangelicals often inveighed as being defective in content and illegally passed; but it is interesting because it reveals a tendency thus early to differentiate between the greater and the lesser tenets of the Confession of Faith. Twelve ministers—thereafter known as the Marrow Men—made a representation against the decision, and were rebuked (1722). The rebuke had no effect. The Marrow Men continued to recommend the book. Six years later, Boston, who was one of their number, issued a new edition; and nothing happened.

In the Simson cases and the *Marrow* case we find ourselves near the head waters of the two rival tendencies which ran side by side in the Church for more than a

<sup>4</sup> “A worthy divine, who spent some of his time at one of our universities, bestowed several Sabbaths on the *Marrow*: holding forth the damnable errors in the book, and beseeching his dear people, as they tendered the safety of their souls, to be aware of it. Now this happening ere his people had either seen or heard of the *Marrow*, they were mightily alarmed, and had much discourse among themselves on that subject, but could not agree upon the true name. Some alleged it was the *Marrow of Morality*; but they were corrected by others who told them it was the *Mother of Divinity*; and many names, less proper than either of these, were offered, scarce two of them agreeing on the same title. However, they were all of them very desirous to see the book.” Quoted in M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, i. p. 24n.

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century. The religion of reason and the religion of feeling both gained momentum from the reaction against the political religion of the seventeenth century. Both represented an endeavour to move into a wider air, such as the new age brought with it. Both sought some more vital expression of religious life than was possible under the rigid doctrine which had apparently reached final form in the Calvinist Confessions. Both asserted valuably the half-forgotten truth that religion rises and has its being in the "inward parts." From being free, vital and creative tendencies, springing warmly from individual conviction, they both degenerated into systems of ecclesiastical policy; and each in its turn gave birth to a new and intolerable tyranny.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SECESSION.

IN 1712, as has been said, lay patronage was restored by Act of Parliament in spite of the protests of the Church of Scotland. Some legislation of that kind had been expected for several years; but the actual introduction and passing of the Act took the Church by surprise. Except for a brief period during the ascendancy of Cromwell, lay patronage had existed in Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution. In 1690, in spite of a certain reluctance on the part of William of Orange, the right of presentation was taken from patrons. The heritors and elders of a landward parish, the magistrates and elders of a burghal parish, were to "name and propose" a minister to a congregation. If the congregation disapproved, its reasons for disapproval were to be weighed by the presbytery; and the judgment of the presbytery was to be final. If no choice were made within six months, the right of appointment fell to the presbytery *tamquam jure devoluto*. The patrons were to receive compensation from the heritors and elders to the amount of six hundred merks Scots for each patronage. The Act of 1712 repealed the Act of 1690 and restored the patrons to their old rights; but the *jus devolutum* of the presbytery remained.

The preamble to the Act referred to the frequent "heats and divisions" which had arisen at the settlement of ministers in vacant parishes—"heats" which occasionally reached the dimensions of riots. Such

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“ heats ” have happened in Scotland under all systems of electing ministers; and as the event proved, the restoration of patronage by no means delivered the Church from parochial *émeutes*. Trouble arose for many different reasons, usually local or personal; but in the north a frequent cause of disturbance was the settlement of Presbyterians in parishes which had hitherto been under an Episcopalian ministry. Of one such famous riot—the Rabbling of Deer in 1711, where the local presbytery was subjected to great violence at the settlement of the first Presbyterian minister of the parish—it was said that it had much to do with bringing on the Act of 1712. The Jacobites, whose sympathies were all with the Episcopalians, played a considerable part in getting the Act passed. They had much to gain by embarrassing the Church of Scotland; and the Act restoring patronage was but one step in their policy of making the succession of the House of Hanover impossible.

In the case of the larger burghs the Act made little difference. The patronage of the burgh churches was vested in the town councils. Most of the members of the councils were also members of the Church; and since the Reformation town council and kirk-session had been accustomed to work in close harmony in all ecclesiastical matters. Of the landward parishes a large proportion—about a third of the whole number—had as patron the Crown. Almost as many belonged to the nobles; and in an age when parliamentary power lay largely in the hands of the House of Lords, ecclesiastical patronage was valued for political reasons. It was a grievance against patronage that in so many cases the right of presentation belonged, not to those who really knew the parish and its needs, but to a patron whose local connection was of the most shadowy



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description. The General Assembly protested against the Act. But at that period no protests could have been of any avail. The political conditions were all against the Church of a land which bulked so little in the Parliament at Westminster; and the protest of the General Assembly had not the smallest chance of success at any period before the Reform Bill of 1832.

For many years the yoke of patronage was little felt. Many patrons, including the Crown, consulted the wishes of congregations and presbyteries before issuing their presentations. In many cases they were content to allow the six months, which the Act allowed for the exercise of their rights, to elapse; and in those cases the presbyteries generally acted in consultation with the parishioners concerned. Public opinion condemned the man who accepted a presentation from a patron without a "call" from a congregation. But no idea of popular election, as understood to-day, was then current. Election by heritors and elders was described as popular; and to heritors and elders some desired to add heads of families. About 1725 we become conscious of a distinct difference of opinion in the General Assembly; but the division was upon no greater matter than whether heads of families ought to be taken into account or not.<sup>1</sup> Clearly that alone was not sufficient to cause serious division. But, as we have already seen, the oath of abjuration, the Simson

<sup>1</sup> "From this time it is quite clear that there is a party contending for popular election in the settlement of ministers; that is, for an election by the heads of families as well as by heritors and elders; in opposition both to the law of patronage and the practice established under the Act of 1690. On the other hand, the party in opposition to them, far from contending for the settlement of parishes by presentations alone, without the aid of a call, contend for nothing more than the call shall be exclusively by heritors and elders, and approved or disapproved, for reasons shewn, by the congregation, and that this rule shall be uniformly followed in the exercise of the *jus devolutum*; under which far the greatest number of parishes were at that time supplied."—Moncreiff, *Life of Dr. John Erskine*, p. 440.

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cases, and the *Marrow* had caused much feeling; and the cumulative effect of those things was to create a habit of party spirit. With the habit of party spirit came inevitably the desire for ascendancy; and the mode of electing ministers, who would in due course be members of church courts with votes, had some bearing upon this. For many years after the Revolution the Church had not enough ministers to fill all her posts, and the church courts were occupied less with the election of ministers than with cases in which two or more parishes made competing calls for the same minister; but with an increase in the supply of ministers more thought was naturally bestowed upon the process of election.

The General Assembly is the final court of appeal in the Church of Scotland. It consisted chiefly of representatives from the presbyteries; but the cost and difficulty of travelling at that time were such that country ministers and elders could not as a rule attend with the frequency which would enable them to become familiar with its ways. The General Assembly was largely in the hands of Edinburgh ministers and elders. During the long interval between the annual meetings urgent business was handled by the Commission of Assembly, which in those days was a comparatively small committee appointed by Act of the General Assembly. To be a member of Commission was an object of ambition; and as the same men were appointed year after year, the Commission became a junta which ruled the Church. Since the death of Carstairs in 1715 no minister had arisen with his gifts of leadership; and the influential members of the General Assembly and of its Commission were laymen, some of them politicians, some of them landowners residing near Edinburgh, many of them Edinburgh lawyers. These

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laymen held indeed the office of elder; but many of them performed none of its duties except attendance at the General Assembly. There was little real debate. Every member was nominally entitled to speak; but in practice few obtained an opportunity except upon the direct invitation of the Moderator. A warm discussion in 1724 on the composition of the Commission showed that there was much discontent throughout the Church; but the discussion brought about no change. By an Act of Assembly of 1697—generally known as the Barrier Act—no measure of the General Assembly could come into force unless it had received the approval of a majority of the presbyteries; but complaint was made that even this safeguard was being broken down by the prevailing party. Members of a church court might signify their disapproval of a decision by lodging a statement of protest or dissent with reasons, which was engrossed in the records of the court. This right, however, was greatly abused; and at last an Act of Assembly of 1730, which received the approval of the presbyteries under the Barrier Act, forbade the recording of reasons of dissent. This decision bore with special hardness upon many of the straiter sect, who had been accustomed to make much use of protests. Their references to their opponents were usually couched in abusive language, often illustrated by quotations from the more denunciatory writings of the Old Testament prophets. Every opinion which was contrary to their own was a wilfully irreligious opinion; and every one, who supported a measure or a policy to which they were opposed, was engaged in a conspiracy to “betray the work of God.”

The settlement of vacant parishes gave prolonged trouble to the church courts. Each year the time of the General Assembly and of its Commission was largely

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taken up with cases. The law of the Church was still somewhat fluid; and the decision of the General Assembly did not always bring peace. It fell to presbyteries to execute the decisions of the General Assembly; but presbyteries, being much under the influence of local opinion, and sometimes containing a majority of the Popular Party, often refused to put the decisions of the General Assembly into force, and pled conscientious difficulties. In 1729 the device was adopted whereby the duty of a recalcitrant presbytery would be done for it by a committee appointed for the purpose by the General Assembly or its Commission—known for various reasons as a “riding” committee. This device did not at first remove difficulties. Where a riding committee settled a minister to whom a considerable section of the parish objected—and it was only in such cases that a riding committee was necessary—there was sometimes a scene of disorder and violence; and presbyteries, affected both by local opinion and by the inconsistencies of church law, often allowed their meetings to become scenes of ill-nature and sanctified turbulence, as disgraceful as the riotousness of the parishioners. In the hope of delivering the Church from those discreditable altercations, and of establishing uniformity of procedure, the General Assembly of 1731 passed an Act ordaining that presbyteries, in exercising the *jus devolutum*, were to proceed upon a call given by the heritors, being Protestants, and elders of the parish. It was apparently a return to the procedure laid down in 1690; but in the new Act the heritors and elders were not to “name and propose,” but to “elect,” and the congregation—that is, the heads of families—came into the process only after the election was “finished.” Over this Act a storm broke out.

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The leader of the opposition was Ebenezer Erskine, minister of Stirling, who for many years had been a prominent figure in the Popular, Wild, or High-flying party. He was of a type well-known in Scotland—pious with a stern and gloomy piety, studious and learned within the prescribed ambit of Calvinist orthodoxy, pure in life, austere in character, irascible and irreconcilable. The son of a Covenanter who had suffered torture and imprisonment, his mind was cast in the mould of the seventeenth century; and his thought, speech, and manner were according to the traditions of the Covenant. For twenty-seven years he was minister of Portmoak. His popularity as a preacher was such that he found it necessary in fine weather to preach in a field adjoining his church; and the Communion season at Portmoak drew to his parish a multitude from all parts, sometimes of more than two thousand persons. To hear him preach, it was said, was to hear “the gospel in its majesty”—an opinion which was not held by every one. Like others of his type, he regarded his own opinions, and even his prejudices, as given to him by direct divine revelation. Those who opposed, or even criticised, were inspired by enmity to God and were “jostling Christ out of His government.” In the *Simson* and *Marrow* cases he took an active part, always on the more rigid and intolerant side. “Satan,” he said, “hath a party within this church.” He was the leader of the twelve Marrow Men who sustained rebuke at the bar of the General Assembly in 1722. In 1731 he was translated from Portmoak to the third charge of Stirling—a new burghal charge which had just been created by the magistrates of the burgh.

But for the Act of 1732 Ebenezer Erskine would probably not have won any foothold in history. Over that Act, however, he broke into flame. Particularly he

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inveighed against the proposal that the heritors of a parish should take part in the election of a minister. In the General Assembly, in the Tolbooth Church of Edinburgh, in his own pulpit at Stirling he denounced in furious language the favour shown to the "man with the gold ring and the gay clothing." His objection was not based wholly upon social grounds. The heritor as such was not an ecclesiastical person; nor did he forget that among the Protestant heritors of Scotland there were many Episcopalians. As moderator of his synod it fell to him to preach at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling in October, 1732. Preaching from the text, "The stone which the builders refused," he spoke in the characteristic diction of his party of a "new wound given to the prerogative of Christ." The Synod, offended not without reason at some of his remarks, sat in judgment upon the sermon; and after long and angry debate it was found that Erskine's remarks were censurable and deserving of formal rebuke. Erskine carried the matter by appeal to the General Assembly of 1733; but the General Assembly came to the same finding as the Synod. Against this judgment Erskine lodged a protest, to which three ministers of his Synod declared their adhesion. There the matter might easily have ended. The protest was laid upon the table, and no one took any notice of it. But it happened that the paper fell upon the floor; and in an idle moment it was picked up and read by a member who, losing his temper over what he read, succeeded also in rousing the anger of the General Assembly. The four protesters were summoned to the bar and ordered to withdraw their protest. They refused; and the matter was remitted to the Commission of Assembly with instructions to proceed to more severe measures, if the refusal were maintained.

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Erskine and his friends held, quite correctly, that they had done nothing which was contrary to the standards of the Church. They had criticised adversely a piece of ecclesiastical legislation; and they were within their rights in so doing. The language which they used was, of course, recklessly extreme; but that was the customary language of their party, and did not necessarily bear its face value. Finding them immovable, the Commission of Assembly suspended them from their ministerial functions. The four disregarded the sentence; and at its next meeting the Commission proceeded to loose them from their parishes and declare them no longer ministers of the Church of Scotland. The sentence was severe, though not so severe as some members of the Commission desired; for some favoured a sentence of deposition. But the Commission included also several who sympathised with Erskine's views; and representations had been sent up in his favour from several presbyteries, as well as from the magistrates of Stirling,<sup>2</sup> Erskine's own town, and of Perth, where one of Erskine's fellow-protesters was minister. The misfortune was that both parties had brought themselves into a position in which neither could afford to do the right thing. Both the leaders of the General Assembly and the four protesters showed themselves lacking in magnanimity, lacking also

<sup>2</sup> Magistrates in burghs—whose election before the Burgh Reform Act of 1834 was far from "popular"—were the burghal counterparts of the heritors of "landward" (*i.e.* rural) parishes. Upon them fell the duty of maintaining the church or churches in their burghs. Their relations with the burgh churches varied from burgh to burgh, but were very intimate, far more so than the relation between the heritors and the parish church in landward parishes. Magistrates seem to have exercised such purely ecclesiastical functions as appointing elders, fixing the dates of Communion and watching over church-door collections. Each burgh was represented in the General Assembly by an elder. Erskine's objections to heritors do not seem to have extended to magistrates, though at that date they were far more likely to be "men with gold rings" than the average heritor.

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perhaps in humour and a sense of proportion. The whole story is rather squalid. But for its consequences, which were considerable, the duel between Ebenezer Erskine and the General Assembly would have interest only as a study in provincialism.

The result of Erskine's protest was the creation of a new sect. The four replied to the sentence of the Commission in a document in which they declared themselves to be in a state of "secession." The word had a recognised meaning. It suggested an alienation which would only be temporary; and as has happened in nearly all other divisions of the Church of Scotland, the Seceders described themselves, not as breaking new ground or declaring new truths, but as holding faithfully to the true doctrine of the Scottish Church. Regarding themselves as the victims of an unjust majority, the Seceders asserted their right to continue their church life without thereby cutting themselves off spiritually from the life of the true church.<sup>3</sup> The sentence of the Commission was treated as null. Three weeks later the four protesters met at the hamlet of Gairney Bridge in Kinross-shire; and there after much thought they resolved "to constitute into a presbytery." Three months later they issued their *Testimony* or manifesto. This was afterwards amplified into the *Judicial Testimony* of 1736, the adjective implying that the new presbytery was prepared to exercise the whole jurisdiction of a church court.

The Seceders declared with emphasis that they broke away from communion, not with the Church of Scot-

<sup>3</sup> "We do protest that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise the keys of doctrine, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and Confession of Faith, and the principles and constitutions of the covenanted Church of Scotland . . . and we hereby appeal unto the first free, faithful and reforming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland."—*First Testimony* (ed. 1779), p. 32.



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land, but only with the "prevailing party" within it. They said that they desired to remain in communion with all "who desire with us to adhere to the principles of the true presbyterian, covenanted Church of Scotland"—that is, with all who agreed with themselves; and these were a considerable number. There was a widespread feeling that the leaders of the General Assembly had gone too far. Petitions and representations poured in; and the signatories were by no means confined to one party. For six years the General Assembly spared no endeavour to heal the wound which the Secession had inflicted. The sentence of suspension was removed; the Act of 1732 was repealed; effort after effort was made at conciliation. But to all such measures the Seceders remained obdurate. "Every pin in God's tabernacle,"<sup>4</sup> said Erskine, "was to be framed and set according to the pattern set in the Holy Mount." The grievances of the Seceders had multiplied since their first protest; and they were not prepared to acquiesce in the smallest difference from themselves in any matter of ecclesiastical polity, great or small. Every such difference was a sign of wilful evil-doing. For six years the Seceders remained in a somewhat anomalous position—acting as a separate judicatory, yet continuing in occupation of their pulpits and parishes. In the end (1740) the Seceders were deposed.

The *Testimonies* of the Seceders show that the

<sup>4</sup> The quotation comes from an extraordinary ebullition in which Erskine denounced five elders of Stirling who disagreed with his policy, and who shewed their disagreement by standing aloof from all the duties of their office, except that of "standing at the plate"; and on that right they insisted, and were supported by the town council. Erskine denounced them from the pulpit by name in a characteristic pronouncement wherein, "as a messenger and herald of the Great King, whose name is the Lord of Hosts," he summoned them "to compare before the bar of Christ, the King and Head of His church, at the time He hath in sovereignty appointed, to answer for their conduct."—*Testimony* (ed. 1779), p. 204.

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Secession was in reality a revolt against the spirit of a new age, which was rapidly obliterating all the landmarks of the Covenanting period. To the Seceders the age of the Covenants was the golden age of the Church; in the eyes of those against whom they testified it was no such thing. In their *Testimonies* they lift up their parable against every indication that the times were ceasing to honour the ideals which they loved. They see the "Lord's anger" brooding over a "sinful, gospel-despising, and covenant-breaking Scotland." They speak of the "manifold abounding sins and the great degeneracy of the age wherein we live,"—"signs and causes of the Lord's departure." The Scottish Parliament had consented that "the maintenance of the hierarchy and ceremonies in England should be a fundamental and essential article of the Union" of 1707; and therefore that Union had become "one of our public national sins." The Union had made possible the Toleration and Patronage Acts; and these were denounced. It had made possible a Christmas vacation in the Court of Session—"the vacation of our most considerable courts of justice in the latter end of December"; and that "superstitious" practice was contrary to the Covenant. "Abounding profanity, impiety, and the vilest immoralities of all sorts"—so they describe the character of the times. The stage, the dance, the new method of taking the oath, the repeal of the penal statutes against witches "contrary to the express letter of the law of God," the new style of preaching—everything which indicates a departure from the customs and ideals of the Covenants comes under their lash; and a "righteous and holy God may justly forsake and cast off this church and land." Sometimes they denounce the legislature for intervening in church matters; sometimes they grieve that the legislature does

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not exercise its authority. Like true sons of the Covenant, they have much faith in the civil magistrate and his sword, always provided that he is on their side.

The *Testimonies* devote a large space to matters of doctrine. The *Judicial Testimony* in particular enters with great minuteness into the cases of two "heretics," who had, as the Seceders thought, been inadequately censured by the General Assembly—Simson of Glasgow and his pupil, Archibald Campbell of St. Andrews. Besides denouncing the opinions of the "heretics," the Seceders proceeded to declare their own faith fully and elaborately. The *Judicial Testimony* shows that the Seceders were concerned for purity of doctrine, as they understood it, as much as for purity of church government. Their doctrine, as stated there, is unmistakably Calvinistic. It is interesting, however, in the light of subsequent developments in all the Scottish churches, to note that they are not content with merely declaring their loyalty to the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, but take the opportunity to publish a new summary of belief, which, though closely conforming to the Confession, nevertheless does not include various details on which the Confession makes definite statements. In spite of their meticulous conservatism, even the Seceders were feeling the influence of the new age.

To their minds the National Covenant, and even the Solemn League and Covenant, were of perpetual obligation. Those documents became terms of communion in the Secession Church; and a ritual was devised by which from time to time ministers and congregations might renew the Covenants. The conception of the Church held by the Seceders did not contain much promise of freedom. Nevertheless, in spite of their severe discipline and inelastic beliefs, the Secession in its own way made in the end for freedom.

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after a pattern that would probably not have commended itself to Erskine and his friends. It was the most democratic of churches. Its office-bearers and members from the beginning had the habit of discussing fully—often indeed at portentous length—everything that formed a part of their church life. The profoundest matters of belief and the most difficult questions of government were perpetually debated among them. So also, and at equal length, were the minutiae of ecclesiastical procedure and congregational convention. During the infancy of the Secession, and for many years after, there was no political life in Scotland; but the interminable discussions of the Seceders on theological and ecclesiastical interests did much to create the atmosphere in which grew up afterwards the political liberalism of Scotland.

Whether such results would have been to the mind of Erskine and his colleagues it is vain to enquire. Where the theocratic temper rules, the result may easily be predicted. The irreconcilable spirit, which the Seceders showed to the Church of Scotland, they soon showed towards one another. Within a few years of its origin the Secession broke in two. The Burgess Oath, as administered in certain large burghs, contained a provision binding the burgess "to profess and allow within my heart the true religion which at this present is publicly preached within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof." Did that imply support of the Church of Scotland, the Established Church against whose many sins the Seceders were a living protest? If so, no true Seceder could become a burgess of his burgh without being disloyal to his church; and the status of a burgess was much valued. Or did the oath imply only the support of the national Protestantism? If so, Seceders could take the oath without any difficulty.

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This small matter provoked a furious controversy within the Secession Church. The Secession divided (1747) into two groups—known generally as the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers—which organised themselves as separate and distinct churches. Both sections were incapable of compromise, and pursued their opinions to their logical end; and church history contains no more ironical chapter than that which tells how Ebenezer Erskine, the founder of the Secession, who carried himself with so haughty and uncompromising a spirit towards his brethren of the Church of Scotland in 1733, was himself subjected by his own disciples to the “greater” excommunication and solemnly handed over to Satan.

It is not improbable that the four protesters, who formed themselves into a presbytery at Gairney Bridge in 1733, expected to be joined by a considerable number of the ministers of the Church. If so, their expectations were not fulfilled. Many sympathised strongly with them in their contentions; but few of these were prepared to take the extreme step of separating from the Church. When in 1740 the General Assembly proceeded to depose the Seceders, the original four had increased to eight—one of the additional four being Ralph Erskine, brother of Ebenezer and minister of Dunfermline, the most interesting of all the Seceders. Early in their career, while the General Assembly was still promoting measures of reconciliation, the Seceders showed that they were tending towards the constitution of a distinct church. The *Judicial Testimony* of 1736 was an announcement to the world that they were prepared to exercise all the functions of a presbytery—amongst other things, to be responsible for the supply of ordinances to those who adhered to them. In the same year one of their number was appointed a professor for

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the training of students for the ministry. Almost from the beginning applications for "supply of sermon" came in from various parts of the country. The Secession became the nucleus round which local discontents embodied themselves—discontents which did not always spring directly from the cause for which the Seceders were testifying. With four, and even with eight ministers, it was impossible to meet all demands; and in 1747, when the Secession broke in two, the number of ministers was still insufficient to permit every congregation to have its own minister. Some of those congregations were drawn from very wide areas. The congregation of Kilmaurs had members from nearly every parish in Kyle and Cunningham. Craigdam was a centre for the whole of Buchan, and Craigmailen for West Lothian. While ministers were few, and congregations were scattered, the Praying Societies proved invaluable allies.

The Secession Church came into being while the country was beginning to grow rapidly in wealth and population. By 1740 the tide had fairly turned, though it was not yet at the full. The tobacco trade of Glasgow was already second only to London. The thread industry of Paisley was progressing swiftly; and the linen manufacture was producing annually as much as the capital lost in the Darien disaster. Tree-planting was beginning; agriculture was improving. Signs were not wanting that the standard of comfort was rising; for thatched roof was giving place to slate, granite houses were rising in Aberdeen, coach-builders were setting up places of business in Edinburgh, and factories opening for the manufacture of earthenware or glass. In the rising class of prosperous burghers the Secession found a congenial soil. It waxed strongest in the districts which first felt the warmth of the new

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prosperity, in Glasgow and the west. It made no attempt, such as the Free Church made in the following century, to cover the whole nation and to oppose the Church of Scotland in every parish. It was content to supply a demand without doing much to create it; and that demand arose strongly in some parts of the country, and in others not at all. No congregation was recognised until it was in a position to make adequate provision for its minister. The sum required was equal to most of the parochial stipends of the day. It is not possible to speak with absolute certainty as to the financial circumstances of Erskine and his friends; but it seems that they did not lose, and may even have gained, by secession.

The increase of population was throwing the machinery of the Church of Scotland somewhat out of gear. Villages grew into towns; and towns and villages sprang up where previously there had been open country. Sometimes the parish church became too small for the population; and there was no obligation upon the heritors to enlarge a building, unless the building was so ruinous that rebuilding was necessary. Sometimes the parish church was far away from some industrial village which had grown up within the bounds of the parish. The days were still distant when the Church of Scotland would be compelled by circumstances to take note of the altered distribution of the population; and in the meantime her lack of elasticity was to the advantage of the Seceders.

As the Secession grew in numbers, it lost in intensity, though this loss was less than it might otherwise have been, on account of the sharp feud that raged between Burgher and Anti-Burgher. In such communities the necessity for self-preservation is always strong; and the Seceders accordingly drew as strict a line as possible

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between their people and the people of the Church of Scotland. To countenance in any way the ministrations of the Church of Scotland or even of the rival branch of the Secession, to attend its services even occasionally, or to show any practical interest in its affairs were ecclesiastical offences for which the culprit might be subjected to censure at the bar of session or presbytery; nevertheless the offence was frequently committed. The Seceders had their own vocabulary, and even their own accent—a chant or intonation which was regarded as essential in the pulpit; and at ordination ministers bound themselves not to use “enticing words of men’s wisdom.” To read a sermon from manuscript was forbidden. But the Seceders could not wholly resist the influence of their time. The contagion entered even the chosen fold of the Anti-Burghers, the straitest sect of the Secession; and their synod found it necessary to issue a severe admonition<sup>5</sup> against any such compliance with the fashions of the day. If architecture be in any way a reflection of the inner mind, it may be worth while to observe that the severely plain buildings of the Seceders conformed to the same type as the buildings of the Church of Scotland; and they marked the

<sup>5</sup> “The Synod cautions those under their inspection, who may be pointing towards public work in the church, against an affected pedantry of style and pronunciation, and politeness of expression, in delivering the truths of the gospel, as being an using of the enticing words of man’s wisdom, and is inconsistent with the gravity that the weight of the matter requires, and as proceeding from affectation to accommodate the gospel in point of style which, if not prevented, may at length issue in attempts to accommodate it also, in point of of matter, to the corrupt taste of a carnal generation; and that they recommend to all the ministers of this Synod to show a suitable pattern in this matter, in endeavouring in their public ministrations, by the manifestation of the truth in plainness and gravity, to recommend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God; and at the same time the Synod give caution against all such meanness and impropriety of language, as hath a tendency to bring discredit upon the gospel, as also against using technical, philosophical and and learned terms that are not commonly understood.”—M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession*, i. 378.



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resting-places of their dead with precisely the same kind of tombstone. They regarded themselves as having a higher standard of spiritual life than their rivals; but there is nothing to indicate that the Secession, with its severity and its enthusiasm, produced either a higher or a lower type of character than the Church of Scotland. The exclusiveness and the conservatism of the Seceders had their due effect. During the eighteenth century they exercised little influence upon the general course of church history. Not a single personality appeared among the Seceders of more than local or denominational celebrity. Their influence was felt in public affairs only after the nineteenth century was well on its way. But by that time, as we shall see, the Seceders had recovered from their subdivisions and were studying rather to attain unity among themselves. They had cast aside the lumber of the Covenants; and instead of testifying stubbornly to a dead tradition, they had become vehement advocates of change.

## CHAPTER V.

### EXPERIMENTS IN FREEDOM.

DURING the second quarter of the eighteenth century the economic development of Scotland, which favoured the numerical increase of the Seceders, reacted powerfully also upon the Church of Scotland. The austerity of former days began to give place to a more sunny spirit; and the landmarks of the period are a series of interesting episodes in which, after a struggle, the broader and more tolerant temper of the age successfully asserted itself.

By the middle of the century we are conscious of an air of spaciousness and vigour such as had not been known in Scotland since the days of James IV. To those days belong, for example, the planning of the New Town of Edinburgh. Those were the days also of the Tobacco Lords of Glasgow, in the midst of whom Robert Foulis dreamed of a school of art, and established a printing press famous for its beautiful type and accurate texts. There were signs of improvement in the externals of church life and worship, though these were still few and unpopular. Thus, about the middle of the century we hear of endeavours to provide better music than had been usual; for the music of the Church had fallen far from the standards of Reformation times, and the noble psalmody of the Reformation was almost wholly lost. Improvement was, however, very difficult; for attempts to raise the standard and to improve the taste often led to unseemly congregational brawls. Church buildings were often allowed to fall into a scandalous

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condition of dirt and disrepair—a fault which was not peculiar either to Scotland or to Presbyterians. But there was a promise of better things when municipalities, reflecting, it may be presumed, the general taste of their burghs, used their increasing resources to erect such stately buildings as the West Kirk of Aberdeen (1755) or St. Andrew's, Glasgow (1760).

The General Assembly of 1736, which like its predecessors showed its willingness to conciliate the Seceders, dealt also with the case of Professor Archibald Campbell of St. Andrews, formerly a pupil of Simson at Glasgow. Some of his utterances were regarded as open to unfavourable interpretation. But his explanations to a committee of the General Assembly were completely satisfactory; and his case was dismissed with a warning, not entirely undeserved, to beware of ambiguous language in future. The issue of the trial was a clear indication that the Church of Scotland was actuated by a spirit of breadth and toleration which would have been impossible if the Seceders had gained the upper hand in her councils. Campbell was not the only target. Other Moderate divines were put on trial; but the cases proceeded without acerbity, and in each case the accused found that the tide was with him. Thus, Principal Wishart of Edinburgh was arraigned and acquitted for “profanely diminishing the due weight and influence of arguments taken from the awe of future rewards and punishments”—an accusation which we can understand on remembering that the conventional sermons of the Popular or Evangelical party invariably ended, as Boston's *Fourfold State* had ended, with eloquent and elaborate descriptions of the life after death. In 1744 William Leechman, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow,

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was taken to task for a sermon on prayer, because he did not speak specifically of prayer being offered in the name of Christ. Leechman was able to show that the sermon dealt only with the arguments of a certain pamphlet, and that in other sermons he had dealt fully with the truth which he was accused of omitting. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Adams of Falkirk, himself a member of the Evangelical party, commented in his concluding address on the tolerant spirit of the court. "Have we not seen," he said, "the beauty of Christian charity in condescension on the one hand to remove offence, and readiness on the other to receive satisfaction?" The General Assembly had travelled a good way in the few years that had passed since the trial of Simson; and its atmosphere was very different from the lurid atmosphere of the *Judicial Testimony*.

In his discourse, *The Apostles no Enthusiasts*, Campbell, like a true son of the eighteenth century, anticipated the early disappearance of "enthusiasm." In the vocabulary of the day the word was of evil significance and connoted fanaticism; and with fanaticism no Moderate would have any dealings. Even while he wrote, the process had begun which was to change the meaning of the word, though he did not live to see the process brought to Scotland. The mighty evangelism of Wesley and Whitefield had commenced in England; and Whitefield, attracted to Calvinist Scotland, was in correspondence with Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. It was their desire that he should come to Scotland to work with them, and with them alone. To such a wish Whitefield could not accede. He had no intention of mingling in the Scottish controversies about church-government. His purpose was to come "as an occasional preacher, to preach the simple gospel to all who are willing to hear me, of whatever

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denomination." The story of the meeting of Whitefield and the Seceders has often been told. He came to Scotland in 1741 and met them at Dunfermline. Somewhat to his surprise, they proceeded forthwith to constitute the presbytery; and it became clear that their purpose was to educate him on the matter of church government. Whitefield was a priest of the Church of England; and in the eyes of the Seceders, who knew nothing about it save what they had read in books of polemical divinity, the Church of England was greatly in need of purgation. They regarded the Solemn League and Covenant as of perpetual obligation; and they were shocked to discover that Whitefield neither knew nor cared about the Solemn League and Covenant. "I asked them seriously what they would have me to do. The answer was that I was not desired to subscribe immediately to the Solemn League and Covenant, but to preach only for them till I had further light. I asked, 'Why only for them?' Mr. Ralph Erskine said, 'They were the Lord's people.' I then asked whether there were no other Lord's people but themselves? And supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to; and therefore I was more and more determined to go out into the highways and hedges; and that if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ therein. Soon after this the company broke up; and one of these otherwise venerable men immediately went into the meeting-house and preached . . . The good man so spent himself in the former part of his sermon in talking against prelacy, the Common Prayer Book, the surplice, the rose in the hat, and such like externals, that when he came to the latter part of his text, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone that he could

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scarce be heard.”<sup>1</sup> When Whitefield proceeded to preach in parish churches, the wrath of the Seceders was great; and the man, of whom Ralph Erskine had said at his first coming to Scotland, “The Lord is evidently with him,” and whom the Seceders would have welcomed so greatly if he had confined himself to their sect, was denounced in language of extraordinary bitterness as an agent of the devil.

The Seceders were not alone in regarding the great evangelist with suspicion. Many Evangelical ministers of the Church of Scotland looked askance at a preacher who had received his ordination at the hands of a prelate. Obviously he was a man of religion, “an instrument,” as Ebenezer Erskine said, “of gathering a great multitude of souls to the faith and profession of the gospel of Christ.” Could a man of God then spring from a prelatic church without having qualms on the subject of episcopal ordination? How could a man of such undoubted spiritual power treat the Covenants as small matters of no importance? Scottish Presbyterians had been accustomed to regard the details of their church-government as of primary value; yet this man, who preached so powerfully the doctrines which they also loved to preach, described all such matters as “moonshine.” The Seceders had no hesitation in forming their opinion; but that opinion was partly due to their chagrin at finding that he was not to be captured for their sect. But among the Evangelicals of the Church of Scotland the influence of Whitefield worked in the end towards a wider catholicity and a greater freedom. It was something to learn that vital godliness could be found elsewhere than in Scotland. It was something also to learn that the local details of ecclesiastical polity could not be put

<sup>1</sup> Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, i. 509; Gillies, *Life of Whitefield*, p. 73.

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on the same level as the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion.

Much criticism was directed against Whitefield's method, of which the most outstanding instance was seen at the "Cambuslang Wark" of 1742. A "revival" began spontaneously in the parish, and continued for several months, waxing in intensity till it reached its climax at a great Communion gathering, at which it was said that thirty thousand were present. Whitefield visited Cambuslang from time to time while the "Wark" went on, and took part in the services at the Communion—the most memorable of all his preachings. The influence of the Cambuslang Wark went far beyond its place of origin. Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kilsyth, Irvine, Coldingham, Dundee, Crieff, Nairn, even far-away Ross and Sutherland—these and many other places felt the impulse. The Seceders burst into flame at the spectacle, and appointed a day of solemn fast and humiliation for the countenance shown to a "priest of the Church of England, who had sworn the oath of supremacy and abjured the Solemn League and Covenant." Evangelicals of the Church of Scotland, understanding perfectly the cause of the Seceders' fury, replied to their pronouncement—"the most heaven-daring paper which had been published by any set of men in Britain for a century past." The Moderates looked upon it all with disdain. They had no sympathy with those outbursts of "enthusiasm," and scarcely regarded such things as pertaining to religion at all. Their opinion has been the opinion of most Scottish churchmen; for Scottish religion has not on the whole shown itself hospitable to the methods of the revivalist. Between 1741 and 1768 Whitefield visited Scotland fourteen times; but on none of his later visits did his preaching produce such remarkable results as at Cambuslang.

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While Whitefield's visits were going on, the nation had to deal with the Jacobite rising of 1745, the suppression of which led to the opening up of the Gaelic area. In that region the work of the Church had hitherto proceeded with very great difficulty. The physical obstacles in a territory without roads or bridges were the smallest that had to be overcome. The Highlands were separated from the Lowlands by barriers of race and language. A considerable part was Roman Catholic. Where the Reformation had taken root, the Highlands adhered to the Episcopal rather than to the Presbyterian system; and the crushing of the Jacobites brought disabilities and sufferings upon the Episcopalians, which were not less than the sufferings of the Covenanters. In 1725 George I had instituted the Royal Bounty—an annual gift of £1000, afterwards increased to £2000, to maintain preachers and catechists in the Highlands and Islands. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, founded in 1707, undertook the work of planting schools. After the suppression of the Jacobite rising many of the difficulties became less; but the task of supplying the vast parishes of the Highlands with churches, schools, ministers and teachers still remained one of the heaviest burdens of the Church.

In 1755 and 1756 the attempt was made to bring to the bar of the General Assembly no less a person than David Hume. With him was bracketed the versatile and interesting Lord Kames, an elder of the Church, and therefore subject to its discipline as Hume was not. The alarm was given by Hume's *Essay on Miracles*—a work which was in reality a treatise on the nature of evidence. In that book Hume maintained the thesis that “no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would



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be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." Strangely enough, no alarm had been caused by the earlier *Treatise on Human Nature* which, as its author remarked, "fell dead-born from the press, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur from the zealots." The *Treatise* might have suggested to his critics that the author of the *Essay* was in reality uncertain whether there could be such a thing as testimony. Following on the heels of Locke and Berkeley, Hume completely outdistanced their far-reaching speculations. He argued that not only is there no immediate perception of an external world, not only is there no evidence for the existence of a material world, but also there is no evidence for the existence of mind. There is only a succession or sequence of impressions with no link to bind them to one another. Hume had struck at the root of all knowledge and belief; and the *Essay on Miracles* was in reality little more than a footnote to his general philosophical teaching. The matter came before the Committee on Overtures. A keen debate went on for two days, and was admirably conducted on both sides; and the decision was to proceed no further in the matter. There was no attempt to repeat the foolish tactics of the Marrow case. It had become clear to all parties that excommunication and other church censures are not the appropriate weapons for dealing with philosophical hypotheses, however critical and destructive. "The freedom of enquiry and debate," wrote Dr. Hugh Blair, the most celebrated preacher of the day, at this time minister of Lady Yester's Church, Edinburgh, "though it may have published some errors to the world, has undoubtedly been the source from whence many blessings have flowed upon mankind....In this country, therefore, all attempts to infringe so valuable a

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privilege, in cases where the peace of society is not concerned, must ever be regarded with concern by all reasonable men. The proper objects of censure and reproof are not freedom of thought but licentiousness of action.”<sup>2</sup> “I should be sorry,” said another Moderate, George Campbell, then minister of Banchory, afterwards Principal of Marischal College, “that in this island so great a disservice were done to religion as to check its adversaries in any other way than by returning a candid answer to their objections.”<sup>3</sup>

The reply to Hume came from two country ministers. Campbell of Banchory dealt with the *Essay on Miracles* in a sermon before the Synod of Aberdeen, which he afterwards elaborated into the *Dissertation upon Miracles* (1762). Thomas Reid of Newmachar ploughed a deeper furrow. In 1764 he published his *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, the result of his long meditation upon the *Treatise on Human Nature*. It is interesting to note that, rather to Hume’s embarrassment, both Campbell and Reid submitted their writings to him in manuscript, Campbell to make sure that he had not misrepresented his opponent, Reid that his English might be corrected. “I wish,” said Hume, “that parsons would confine themselves to their old occupation of worrying one another, and leave philosophers to argue with temper, moderation, and good manners.” But to his delight he found that he had to deal, not with zealots, but with philosophers.

Almost alone of the great company of Scottish *literati* of the eighteenth century, Hume’s works are still alive. His personal ambitions were literary rather than philosophical; and with the perverse tendency of mankind to take less pride in their real achievements than

<sup>2</sup> *Observations upon the Analysis*; see Morren’s *Annals*, ii. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell, *Dissertation upon Miracles*, etc. (1823), p. 216.

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in the objects of their ambition, he thought more of his *History of England* than of his "wee bookies" of philosophy. He lives, however, by his philosophy — "absolute scepticism," as Reid called it. "Upon the principles of Locke," said Reid, "who was no sceptic, he hath built up a system of scepticism, which leaves no ground to believe any one thing rather than its contrary. . . . Upon this hypothesis, the whole universe about me, bodies and spirits, sun, moon, stars, and earth, friends and relations, all things without exception which I imagined to have a permanent existence, whether I thought of them or not, vanish at once,

And like the baseless fabric of a vision  
Leave not a track (*sic*) behind."

For the history of the Church of Scotland the philosophy of Hume had this significance, that it cut away the foundations of Rationalism. He compelled Christian apologists to seek a sounder line of defence. He lived for twenty years after the General Assembly considered his writings, spending most of his energy on his *History of England*. His philosophical opinions never altered. He saw Moderatism in its brilliant and triumphant heyday, and lived on terms of affectionate friendship with the leading Moderates in Edinburgh; and his philosophy, published before Moderatism had securely attained its ascendancy, was one of the influences which in the end led to the decay and disappearance of Moderatism.

The same year (1756) saw another blow successfully struck for freedom. In December, 1756, the tragedy of *Douglas* was produced on the Edinburgh stage. It is not a great play, and has long since found its proper level; but it had some little importance in the history of the stage. In Scotland, where as yet the material for sound criticism was not abundant, it was

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greeted enthusiastically as one of the greatest of plays; and the verdict in England was not greatly different. The author was John Home, minister of Athelstaneford, one of the most lovable men of the century, adored in his parish as few ministers have been, of whom it is written that "his entry to a company was like opening a window and letting the sun into a dark room." The rehearsals of the play were followed with close interest by several of his clerical friends; and many of them were present at the public performances.

The storm broke immediately. The attack was led by Dr. Alexander Webster, minister of the Tolbooth Church of Edinburgh, a prince among the Evangelicals, who for many years looked on the Tolbooth Church as their chief citadel. He was a capable man of affairs; for he founded the Ministers' Widows' Fund, and had a considerable part in planning the New Town of Edinburgh. He was also a *bon vivant*, with a capacity for drinking which earned him fame even in that hard-drinking age. To all delights save those of the table this Evangelical leader was a sworn enemy; and under his influence the presbytery of Edinburgh became active over the play of *Douglas*. Amongst others, "Jupiter" Carlyle was reported to the presbytery of Dalkeith; and somewhat to his surprise the presbytery took the matter into serious consideration. He made up his mind "to run every risk rather than furnish an example of tame submission, not merely to a fanatical, but an illegal exertion of power, which would have stamped disgrace on the Church of Scotland, kept the younger clergy for half a century longer in the trammels of bigotry or hypocrisy, and debarred every generous spirit from entering into orders." In due season the case was brought by appeal to the General Assembly of 1757. The decision was

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of the type dear to the ecclesiastical leader, anxious above all things to keep his team in hand. Ministers were instructed to avoid the theatre, and a mild rebuke was administered to the culprit. The injunction had the usual fate. In 1784, when Mrs. Siddons appeared on the Edinburgh stage in this same tragedy of *Douglas*, the General Assembly found it expedient to fix its important business for the alternate days on which she did not appear.

“Of the many exertions,” said Carlyle, “I and my friends have made for the credit and interest of the clergy of the Church of Scotland, there was none more meritorious or of better effect than this. . . . It was of great importance to discriminate between the artificial virtues and vices, formed by ignorance and superstition, from those that are real.”<sup>4</sup> Those words were written by Carlyle many years after, as he looked back from his old age with satisfaction and even with pride on the stand which he had taken. John Home, the author of *Douglas*, bowed to the hurricane and resigned his charge, to the very bitter grief of all his parishioners; but he continued to sit in the General Assembly for many years, holding office there as an elder. He lived to write many more plays—none of them of much value, though successful enough in their day. Dr. Patrick Cumin, who had been leader of the Moderate party for many years, trimmed so skilfully in the debate that he lost his hold on most of his followers; and the leadership passed over to Robertson, the greatest of all Moderate churchmen.

Robertson had already been prominent in the deliberations of the General Assembly for three or four years. He was not yet thirty years of age, and was known, if at all, as a studious country minister, when

<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, *Autobiography*, p. 323.

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he first proved his capacity for leadership. The question of patronage was again acute; and the question of patronage was mixed up with the question of the relation between the General Assembly and the subordinate courts of the Church. At first, as we have noted, the system of patronage was fairly elastic in its working, and did not on the whole conflict greatly with the popular opinion that it was the prerogative of a congregation to elect its own minister. During the twenty years which followed the Secession, a distinct hardening became visible. Patrons were more inclined to insist on their rights; and church courts showed more willingness to accept the situation created by the Act of 1712, especially as there was not the smallest practical chance of obtaining either amendment or repeal.

Several causes combined to stiffen patronage. For one thing, a third of the benefices of Scotland were in the gift of the Crown. The *de facto* ruler of Scotland was the Earl of Islay, afterwards third Duke of Argyle, whose political sympathies were altogether on the side of Walpole, and whose object was to provide a solid and docile group of Scottish representatives at Westminster. The fall of Walpole made no difference to the power or the methods of Argyle. After a brief eclipse he regained his authority and held undisputed sway over Scotland until his death in 1761. To such a politician the Crown patronage of over three hundred parishes was far too valuable an asset to be neglected. It was to his interest to see that the enormous influence of the Church should not fall into the hands of the intractable Popular party. Argyle dispensed his patronage largely with the help of Dr. Patrick Cumin, the Moderate leader, minister of the Old Kirk, Edinburgh, and Professor of Church History in the University.

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Cumin, however, had not the undisputed authority over his party which was won, for example, by his successor Robertson. He was thought to be unduly deferential to the politicians; and many of the younger Moderates were impatient with him for that reason. With Robertson it was a fixed principle, which he maintained successfully throughout the period of his leadership, to keep the Church independent of the politicians. Many of Cumin's contemporaries disliked a system which put two-thirds of the benefices of the Church into the hands of politicians and nobles. Francis Hutcheson of Glasgow University, the great Moderate teacher, urged the heritors of Scotland "not to surrender their power of promoting a pious and cultured clergy to a Minister of State and seven or eight lords." Hutcheson had no desire for popular election. His preference was for the method of 1732, which had brought on the quarrel with the Seceders, and which had been sacrificed in the vain attempt to conciliate them. But while they disliked Cumin's subservience to the politicians, the Moderates had their own reasons for upholding patronage. They considered that it would furnish the Church with a better type of minister. Further, an undue proportion of the time of the General Assembly was taken up with disputed settlements, some of them very protracted; and no matter what decision the General Assembly might reach, a disputed settlement could destroy the peace of a parish and injure the life of its church for years. A firm administration of the law might improve matters.

Patronage was strengthened through the reaction of the landed class, now growing considerably in wealth, against the demand of the Church for an "augmentation" of stipend. In 1750 the General Assembly resolved to approach Parliament in the

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matter. The claim was justified. The Church had stood loyally by the constitution during the Jacobite rising; and there could be no doubt that the attitude of the Church was of the utmost value to the civil government at a time of very real danger. Before the Union the stipends of the clergy of Scotland had been on the whole reasonably adequate; but in fifty years the cost of living had increased greatly, and stipends were no longer sufficient. The committee in charge of the negotiations calculated that £83 12s. 8d. was a reasonable minimum to demand. The legal minimum of the day was £44 8s. 10 $\frac{2}{3}$ d.—800 merks Scots; but of 833 benefices of which the particulars were obtained, 541 were under £85, 476 were under £60, and 41 did not reach the minimum. The committee urged that the teind of Scotland was able to afford a considerable increase of stipend. The teind, or tithe, belonged to the heritors, subject to the burden of paying “competent” stipends; and the committee calculated that much less than half of the total revenue of the teind was used for the payment of stipends. The whole matter was keenly debated in the General Assembly, where many leading elders, being members of the landed class, spoke against the scheme. The landed class opposed it with all their power, and used to the full the advantage which they held in Parliament. The claims of the Church were rejected. But one result of the Augmentation Scheme was to stiffen the determination of patrons to exercise their legal rights.

In the matter of patronage the town councils of the larger burghs asserted their rights as firmly as land-owners. Forty-five benefices were in their hands; and among these were many of the most conspicuous charges of the Church—the churches, for example, of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, and



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Stirling. In the earlier part of the century it was the custom of the town councils to issue their presentations after consultation with the ministers and elders of their burghs. But as the burghs grew, and additional charges had to be erected, the town councils began to insist firmly on their rights as patrons. Town councils, it may be remembered, were practically close corporations until the passing of the Burgh Reform Act of 1834. Their members, who were self-elected, were drawn entirely from the wealthier strata of their communities. In Edinburgh and Glasgow many of the prominent burgesses were cadets or descendants of landed families; and by the middle of the century the rapid growth of wealth had created a new commercial aristocracy, as proud, exclusive, and powerful as any landed class could be. In those cities the decisive step was taken at almost the same date. The two cases are landmarks of burghal history. In Edinburgh a vacancy occurred in Lady Yester's Church in 1762; in Glasgow a minister had to be appointed to the new Wynd Church (1761). In both cases the town councils resolved to depart from former custom and to assert their rights as patrons, in spite of loud popular discontent, which led in each city to the formation of a dissenting church. In subsequent erections of burghal charges the town councils took care that their rights of patronage were clearly stated in the decreets of erection given by the Court of Teinds.

Many influences thus combined to strengthen patronage. But those influences did not weaken the popular hostility to the system. Over and over again the settlement of a minister who had accepted a presentation took place amid disorders which could sometimes be fairly called riots. At Lanark (1750), after a very prolonged vacancy caused by a

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dispute between two claimants to the position of patron, the presbytery met, as directed by the General Assembly, for the ordination of a minister; but so turbulent was the mob that the presbytery was unable to proceed, and the ordination had at last to be carried through, not in Lanark, but in the Tron Church of Glasgow. Robertson remained vacant for three years while a dispute went on between the Duke of Douglas and the church courts. Duns lay vacant for two years while disputes were dealt with in all the ecclesiastical and secular courts of the realm. Litigations between rival claimants to the right of presentation, hot quarrels between groups of heritors and parishioners, each with its candidate, sharp divisions within presbyteries, subjected to the cross-currents of local feeling, the steady undercurrent of detestation of the system—all these combined to prolong the dispeace which seemed to accompany the settlement of ministers in vacant parishes. Vacancies, which in the ordinary course of events need not have lasted longer than a few months, might be protracted for years. Even when the General Assembly had given its decision, presbyteries were often unable to proceed with the settlement. Local odium was of greater weight than the injunction of a supreme court in distant Edinburgh. It was widely held among members of the Popular party that conscientious objections formed a sufficient reason for failing to carry out the decision of the General Assembly; and, as has been stated, the riding committee had been devised for the relief of presbyteries overborne by strength of local feeling or conscientious difficulties. Clearly this was no cure — “a wretched expedient,” said “Jupiter” Carlyle. It did nothing to mollify popular feeling; and like all palliatives it satisfied neither those who administered it nor those who were subjected to it. It

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could not be regarded as in any way a satisfactory method of overcoming a real difficulty of Presbyterian church government.

It is said that Robertson was impelled to action by the disgraceful scenes which he witnessed at the ordination of his brother-in-law at Alloa. Hitherto he had taken no active part in the General Assembly. At the date of the disturbance at Alloa he was still minister of the peaceful parish of Gladsmuir in East Lothian, carrying out with unwearying diligence his duties as a parish minister and his studies in history. He came forward for the first time in 1751 over the case of Torphichen in Linlithgowshire, a parish which had been vacant and in turmoil for over three years, and in which the presbytery pled conscientious objections against executing the decision of the General Assembly. John Home of Athelstaneford, not yet famous as the author of *Douglas*, brought forward a draconic motion to suspend the presbytery; and Robertson seconded him in a striking speech, in which he urged that the time had come to put an end to those growing disorders. Subordinate courts must obey the decisions of superior courts; and the General Assembly ought to maintain the discipline of the Church by enforcing obedience. The motion was lost by 200 votes to 11. The General Assembly appointed a riding committee, on which Robertson was chosen to preside.<sup>5</sup> This was the first and the last occasion on which he served on such a body. No riding committee was ever appointed again.

In the same year a similar case came up from

<sup>5</sup> It has often been stated that Robertson was responsible for the system of riding committees. This is utterly inaccurate. The first was appointed in 1729, when he was a child of eight. So far from inventing and encouraging the system, he disliked it thoroughly and brought it to an end. The Popular party at first disapproved of it; but in the end they found it a very convenient device.

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Inverkeithing in the presbytery of Dunfermline. A Mr. Andrew Richardson, minister of Broughton, a man against whose character and attainments no stone could be thrown, accepted a presentation. The call was signed by a considerable number of the parishioners; but strong opposition was declared by a large number, who had set their hearts on another man. The majority of the presbytery belonged to the Popular party. The locality was one of the storm centres of the Secession; and a violent dispute in one parish might have unpleasant repercussions throughout the neighbourhood. After much tossing about from court to court, the case came at length before the Commission of October, 1751—by which time the parish had been subjected to all the discomforts of a vacancy for more than two years. The Commission decided in favour of Richardson, and issued a peremptory order to proceed forthwith with the settlement, with the threat of “very high censure” if the injunction were not obeyed. In March, 1752, it was reported to the Commission that the presbytery still delayed. So far from censuring the presbytery, the Commission by a small majority accepted its reasons for disobedience and instructed the Synod of Fife to carry out the settlement—a most unusual instruction to give to a Synod, and evidently an endeavour to relieve the presbytery without resorting to the discredited device of a riding committee.

Against this decision a dissent, with reasons, was lodged by a strong group of Moderates, of whom Robertson was the leader. To those reasons replies were drawn up by a committee appointed for the purpose; and both reasons and replies had to come before the General Assembly of 1752. The Moderate document was published in the *Scots Magazine*. It was a manifesto addressed to the whole Church by a group

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of men who had already shown that they were not afraid of strong measures. As in the Torphichen case, but with increased emphasis, the Moderates declared for what Robertson called the "subordination of judicatories." The fundamental principles of the Presbyterian polity, the institution of the Christian Church, and "the nature and first principles of society" alike made it clear that, if an organised society was to exist at all, individual conviction must bow to the general will, and the findings of a supreme court, such as the General Assembly, must be obeyed by subordinate courts. On the other hand, the Popular party, in tones that recalled the Seceders, declared the right of individuals and presbyteries, when actuated by conscience, to withhold obedience from what they believed to be unjust decisions. The Moderates declared that they were reverting to the true principles of government of the Church of Scotland, as laid down and acted upon in the years which followed the Reformation, until they were corrupted by the "anti-constitutional" maxims of "English sectaries." The Popular party quoted the Confession of Faith, and referred to precedents which indicated that they also could find support in the history and standards of the Church.

The cleavage of parties was sharper than it had yet been. The *Reasons* and the *Replies* are important documents, both as revealing the sharpness of the cleavage, and because they show with what difficulty the Church of Scotland was learning the elementary lessons of self-government. Both parties could regard themselves as champions of freedom. Freedom can exist in practice only upon a foundation of law which all accept; so the Moderates held. Law can exist only where due protection is accorded to the individual; so

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the Evangelicals maintained. In this encounter, however, the positions of the parties were not determined either by the humanism of the Moderates or the puritanism of the Evangelicals. Those positions were taken up because one party was dominant at the time, and after the fashion of dominant parties emphasised the principle of authority, while the other party, being in opposition, was true to type in asserting the rights of the individual. The Seceders, who in their day had pled those rights so passionately, paid not the smallest attention to them when they became a separate church and had a realm of their own to govern. When power passed, as it did at a later date, from the Moderates to the Evangelicals, the Evangelicals forgot the rights of conscience and the Moderates the "subordination of judicatories." There is no better commentary on the Inverkeithing case than the Strathbogie case of 1841, when the same pleas were again brought forward, and the two parties had exchanged positions.

The debates in the Commission and the publication of the Moderate manifesto prepared the members of the General Assembly of 1752 for vigorous action. The younger Moderates, Robertson at their head, carried by a large majority an instruction to the presbytery of Dunfermline to proceed three days later to Inverkeithing and induct Richardson. A quorum of presbytery is three; but on this occasion the number was increased to five—perhaps because five had been a quorum of a riding committee. On the day after the induction the ministers of the presbytery were to return to the bar of the General Assembly and report their diligence. When that day came, it appeared that only three ministers had attended at Inverkeithing. Six ministers handed in a document in defence of their conduct—a document which added nothing to the case,

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but merely repeated pleas which had already been brought forward and considered several times. This document they refused to withdraw; and the General Assembly resolved to depose one of them. Next day the six were summoned one by one, and asked if they had anything further to add. Some of them gave answers which could be interpreted to mean that their disobedience would not be obstinate. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, however, read in his own behalf a "humble representation," a paper dealing in general terms with patronage. He became the selected victim and was deposed.

Was it meant as a warning? If so, it was effectual. "Jupiter" Carlyle, who was a member of the General Assembly for the first time that year, speaks with much satisfaction of the "restoration of the discipline of the Church." <sup>6</sup> Nearly ninety years had to pass before the General Assembly had to deal again with a recalcitrant presbytery. A month later, the presbytery of Dunfermline met at Inverkeithing and inducted Richardson.

Of Gillespie it has to be added that he was a man of marked nobility of character, who for ten years had been the diligent and beloved minister of his parish. His experience had been somewhat unusual. He went to Edinburgh University at a later period of life than was customary in those days. While he was in the Divinity Hall, the Secession took place; and his mother, who joined the Seceders, persuaded him to attend the classes of the one Secession professor, Wilson of Perth. Gillespie endured his teaching for only ten days. Wilson, who was one of the four Seceders of Gairney Bridge, held by the Covenants; and neither then nor at any later date had Gillespie the smallest sympathy with

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, 244, 255.

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the Covenanting tradition. He proceeded to England to sit at the feet of Doddridge. From him he received ordination according to the usage of the English Independents. From him also he learned to hold the opinion, hitherto practically unknown in Scotland, that the civil magistrate had "nothing to do" with the religious beliefs or practices of his subjects. On his return to Scotland in 1741, he accepted a presentation to the parish of Carnock. The presbytery of Dunfermline, being not too strict in observing the law of the Church, both recognised his ordination and allowed him to sign the Confession of Faith after he had expressed his objections to certain statements regarding the civil magistrate. In a revival at Kilsyth, which was in some measure the epilogue of the Cambuslang Wark, Gillespie took an active part; and there he came into intimate contact with Whitefield. His association with men so different ecclesiastically from himself as Whitefield and Doddridge led him to lay less stress upon the details of church government than was usual at the time in Scotland.

After his deposition Gillespie continued to preach, at first in the open air at Carnock, afterwards in a church specially built for him at Dunfermline. In 1755 an attempt was made in the General Assembly to remove the sentence of deposition; but the proposal was rejected on the ground that Gillespie himself had made no application—a broad hint to himself which he never took. Ten years later, in 1761, the Presbytery of Relief was formed by Gillespie and two others. Twelve years later, the three charges had expanded into twenty—the new church owing much to the vigour and eloquence of James Baine, minister of its Edinburgh congregation. Unlike the Secession, the Relief showed little animosity towards the Church of Scotland until late in its history.



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Until 1824 it had no Divinity Hall of its own, and was content that its students should attend the Divinity classes at the University, where they mingled with the students of the Church of Scotland. The Relief never became a large church; and in 1847, when it became part of the United Presbyterian Church, it consisted only of 136 congregations. It drew its recruits from a well-to-do stratum of society. Many of its ministers and people regarded themselves, not as a separate church, but as a separate order within the Church, waiting till the Church of Scotland should obtain "relief" from patronage. Gillespie himself, though he made no application for the removal of the sentence of deposition, never ceased to entertain a warm and affectionate feeling for the Church of Scotland. He gathered a large congregation in Dunfermline; and before his death he advised his people to return to the Church of Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

The Relief was, however, the seed-plot of the doctrine which was afterwards known in Scotland as Voluntaryism<sup>8</sup>—the doctrine which more than any other was to perpetuate disunion among Scottish Presbyterians. The civil magistrate had "nothing to do" with the religious beliefs of his subjects. "The meanest subject in the state has as good a right to

<sup>7</sup> The advice was taken. Gillespie's congregation is represented to-day in Dunfermline by St. Andrew's Parish Church.

<sup>8</sup> Voluntaryism originated perhaps in John Glas, minister of Tealing, whose pamphlet, *King of Martyrs*, published in 1725, declared that civil establishments of religion were inconsistent with the Christian religion. For his views Glas was deposed in 1730. but in 1739, at the instigation of his old Synod, he was recognised as a minister of the Gospel, though not a minister of the Church of Scotland. Glas was founder of a sect which attempted to restore what it regarded as primitive Christianity; and from its "love-feasts" (*áyátau*) it earned the sobriquet of the "Kail Kirk." These peculiarities prevented it from growing; but there is evidence that Glas influenced strongly the early apologists of the Relief.

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judge in matters of religion for himself as the prince on the throne." In religion there could be no compulsion; and therefore the Covenants, which contemplated the use of compulsion to establish religious uniformity in the British kingdoms, were not of permanent obligation. "I esteem it ground of humiliation and mourning before God," said Patrick Hutcheson, the authoritative expounder of the principles of the Relief, "that so many in these lands swore those oaths, in which there were sundry things unlawful to be sworn, and other things which not one hundred of the whole British subjects sufficiently understood."<sup>9</sup> Here the Relief was diametrically opposed to the Secession.

But the most fruitful characteristic of the Relief was its advocacy of open communion—a doctrine and practice which in the end it taught to all the Presbyterians of Scotland. "I hold communion," said Gillespie, "with all that visibly hold the Head, and with them only." Such a doctrine was not understood at that time either in the Secession or in the Church of Scotland. The Seceders, regarding "every pin in the tabernacle" as sacred, looked upon such teaching as pernicious. In their eyes few offences were so grievous as for a member of their denomination to join in worship with any religious body but themselves. The Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland were not yet ready for any such doctrine. The Moderates were content with toleration,<sup>10</sup> without making any endeavour to find common ground with those from whom they differed.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Hutcheson, *Messiah's Kingdom*, p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Some Moderates were not far from Gillespie's doctrine, though they did not reach the stage of making their broad-mindedness a formal principle of church fellowship. Principal Leechman, the saint of Moderatism, said to a young Oxford student, "You have chosen the Church for your profession. You are of the Church of England; I am a Presbyterian. *The difference between us is not great.*"—*Life of Leechman*, prefixed to *Sermons*. i. 92.

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Ecclesiastical distinctions, Gillespie held — in this following in the footsteps of Whitefield — were not essential elements of the Christian faith; and he was prepared to hold communion with Episcopalians or Independents who were “visible saints.” The Relief Church was slow to set up denominational barriers between itself and others. It was long before it formally adopted the Westminster Confession as a denominational standard, though it ultimately fell into line with the other Presbyterian churches. To an age which had not yet outgrown the limitations of denominational symbols and organisations, the Relief introduced a spirit which made for catholicity.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE AGE OF THE MODERATES.

After the deposition of Gillespie the Moderates entered upon fifty years of undisputed supremacy in the Church. For the first twenty years they were led by Robertson. His leadership coincided with one of the greatest periods of Scottish history—if the greatness of a period may be measured by its achievements. Neither the age of Wallace and Bruce, nor the age of Knox, great as those epochs were, has meant more for Scottish history than the second half of the eighteenth century. At one bound we pass into the modern atmosphere, and we find ourselves watching the making of the Scotland of to-day. The resounding victories which Chatham had planned in Canada and India had given to the British people a new empire, a new world to occupy; and Scotland was now in a position to take full advantage of her new opportunities. The material progress of the nation may be indicated by the fact that, whereas the Darien disaster plunged all Scotland into misery, neither the fall of the Ayr Bank (1772), involving a loss six times as great as Darien, nor the crash of the tobacco trade of Glasgow as the result of the American War, were able to shake the financial stability of the country. It was the age of Hume and Robertson, of Adam Smith, of Robert Burns, of Smollett, Boswell, and James Watt. Dirty and turbulent Edinburgh became one of the literary capitals of Europe; and the

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dreaded Highlands, lately the nursing-mother of dangerous insurrection, could send poets and publishers to London. In this full life the Church of Scotland shared, after a fashion that would have been impossible if the men of the Secession or the Relief had won the upper hand in its councils. At no other time in its history has it been able to attract to its service so many of the most brilliant minds of the country. "Edinburgh," says Smollett in *Humphrey Clinker*, "is a hot-bed of genius"; and of the list of names, which he gives in support of his statement, the majority are ministers of the Church of Scotland.

In the illustrious roll of the Moderates two names stand out before all others, both for their importance in the records of their party, and for their individual excellence — Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) and William Robertson (1721-1793). The two men differed greatly in personal character as they differed also in views, ambitions, and achievements; but both were unmistakably Moderates. Hutcheson's life was over before Moderatism reached its zenith; and, as was the case with many of the earlier Moderates, his sympathies in ecclesiastical policy were not wholly in line with the principles of Robertson. He was the teacher of the Moderates; and to him more than to any other individual Moderatism gave its hero-worship. Hutcheson himself gave his admiration to Principal Leechman, a saintly figure. Thomas Reid and George Campbell were more original and careful thinkers than Hutcheson. Wishart was a better, and Blair a more popular, preacher. But none of these had Hutcheson's personality or his power of moulding young men. By origin he was an Ulster Presbyterian. In 1729 he succeeded to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, and in that office he remained till his death.

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His manner of lecturing was a new thing in Scotland—for other reasons than because he departed from the academic tradition that all lectures should be given in Latin. The influence which he exerted upon his students in the classroom he exerted also upon men of all orders through his Sunday evening discourses in the College Church; and it was noted that in those discourses he founded himself on the original records of the New Testament rather than on “the party tenets or scholastic systems of modern ages”—a criticism which throws light on the pulpit habits of the day.

Of the teaching of Hutcheson it is not necessary to speak at length here. Effective as it was at the time both in Scotland and in other lands, it has proved to be of little permanent value. He was to a large extent a disciple of Shaftesbury. Like Shaftesbury he sought to discover some central principle which might be regarded as the source of human virtue; and where Shaftesbury spoke of the Moral Sense, Hutcheson spoke of benevolence. His teaching was neither profound nor strong; but it differed greatly from such ethical teaching as had been given in the age of the Covenants. Indeed, for all practical purposes ethical teaching was an almost unknown thing in Scotland until the days of Hutcheson<sup>1</sup>; and coming from a man of such gracious personality, his doctrines caught the ear of the time. “Long after his death,” says Ramsay of Ochtertyre, “I have heard orthodox useful ministers who spoke of their old professor with enthusiastic veneration.” It was perhaps inevitable that in the rebound from arid dogmatism some of his students should run to extremes, and in their pulpits seem to speak more of Socrates

<sup>1</sup> An exception must be made in favour of the valuable *Theologia Moralis* of John Forbes of Corse, the most distinguished of the “Aberdeen Doctors.”

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and Plato than of the Gospel. But such extravagances were not universal, and in due course disappeared;<sup>2</sup> nor were they due to any example which Hutcheson himself gave. His attractive personality, the nobility of his character, his large heart and open hand, his rare gift of making his teaching interesting to those who heard it, the friendliness and accessibility of the man gave him a power both in the Church and in the University such as men of greater talent did not possess.

But the greatest of the Moderates, and in some ways the best, was William Robertson. He was born in the manse of Borthwick in 1721, the son of one who was afterwards a minister of Edinburgh. He was brought up with much austerity and simplicity; and to the end of a long life he never departed from the habits of boyhood. In 1745 he became minister of Gladsmuir. There, as throughout the rest of a very busy life, he proved a model parish minister. There too he laid the foundation of his fame as an historian; for the *History of Scotland* was written wholly in Gladsmuir. In 1758, by which date he was already becoming prominent in the General Assembly, he was translated to Edinburgh, where he occupied in succession the pulpits of Lady Yester's and Old Greyfriars. In 1762 he was appointed Principal of Edinburgh University; and as pluralities were not forbidden, and may even be said to have been encouraged, he combined the offices of Principal and minister of Old Greyfriars until his death. His leadership in the General Assembly began with his success in the Inverkeithing case of 1762. He retired from the leadership in 1780, after some twenty years of authority such as has been wielded by no other Scottish churchman. He died in 1793, having lived long enough to see the French Revolution, which he observed with

<sup>2</sup> Moncreiff, *Life of John Erskine*, p. 62.

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sympathy. Such are the bare outlines of the career of one of the most commanding figures of the Church of Scotland. It is difficult to obtain a near view of the man; for he has been somewhat unfortunate in his biographer, Dugald Stewart, with his imperturbable fluency. But men so different as "Jupiter" Carlyle, John Erskine, and Lord Cockburn all speak of him with genuine admiration and affection. No testimony is more interesting than Erskine's. Erskine and Robertson were fellow-students, and were afterwards colleagues in Old Greyfriars for some forty years. They belonged to opposite schools of thought and led opposite parties in the General Assembly. Yet the two men lived on terms of unbroken friendship: and it is difficult to say whether Erskine's sermon on the death of Robertson did more honour to the man who preached it, or to the man about whom it was preached. The strength of Robertson is shown by his achievements. Alike as Principal of a great university, as historian, as minister of a famous city church, as preacher, as leader of the General Assembly, as representative of a great movement he gave unmistakable evidence of greatness; and not only the Church of Scotland, but churches in which it was once common to mention his name only with detestation, bear ineffaceably the stamp of his influence.

*Vita sine literis mors est*—such was the motto which at the age of fourteen he chose for his commonplace book. From the beginning he was a hard worker, a laborious and indefatigable student. His mind turned early to the study of history—in itself a sign that he belonged to the race of humanists. He lived too soon to know the scientific method of writing history. But he shares with other workers the honour of helping to redeem history from ecclesiastical and political



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partisanship. His broad outlook, his freedom from passion, his calm examination of a stormy period such as the Reformation, his "profound sense of the majesty of history," the unflagging stateliness of his narrative make it worth while to consider his works. In a day when the writers of history were numerous and able, he was the *doyen* of historians; though it may be remembered that Johnson, who loved the man, was far too decided a Tory to approve of his writings.

It was no small thing to be accounted, as he was, the ablest man of letters in the Church of Scotland. The Church was full of men of letters, not a few of whom bore names of wide repute. Conditions had altered greatly since the opening of the century. Some have supposed that the fiery men of the earlier period were ignorant, and even illiterate, in proportion to their fanaticism; but that is not the case. Within their conception of what learning should mean, they were learned. But their learning was kept strictly within the bounds of theological orthodoxy; and though laboriously acquired and maintained, it was utterly lacking in breadth, sympathy, or humanity. On all learning other than their own they looked with suspicion, if not with actual hostility. The Moderates changed that. In their day the clergy of the Church of Scotland attained excellence in many branches of learning and literature; for all learning was regarded as worthy. "Jupiter" Carlyle's words are well-known; but they deserve to be repeated. "I must confess," he said in the course of a debate in the General Assembly of 1789 on the augmentation of stipends, "that I do not love to hear this church called a poor church, or the poorest church in Christendom. I doubt very much that, if it were minutely enquired into, this is really the fact. But independent of that, I dis-

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like the language of whining and complaint. We are rich in the best goods a church can have—the learning, the manners, and the character of its members. There are few branches of literature in which the ministers of this Church have not excelled. There are few subjects of fine writing in which they do not stand foremost in the rank of authors, which is a prouder boast than all the pomp of the hierarchy. We have men who have successfully enlightened the world in almost every branch, not to mention treatises in defence of Christianity or eloquent illustrations of every branch of Christian doctrine and morals. Who have wrote the best histories, ancient and modern? It has been clergymen of this Church. Who has wrote the clearest delineation of the human understanding and all its powers? A clergyman of this Church. Who has written the best system of rhetoric, and exemplified it by his own orations? A clergyman of this Church. Who wrote a tragedy that has been deemed perfect? A clergyman of this Church. Who was the most profound mathematician of the age he lived in? A clergyman of this Church. Who was his successor, in reputation as in office? Who wrote the best treatise on agriculture? Let us not complain of poverty, for it is a splendid poverty indeed! It is *paupertas fecunda virorum*.”<sup>3</sup>

The quotation is interesting for many reasons. It reveals something of the mind of the speaker who, though no leader, was a Moderate of the Moderates, avowed and unashamed; and his words reflect both the qualities and the defects of Moderatism. So far as it was seen at Edinburgh and at other university seats, Moderatism gave constant evidence of its desire and its ability to encourage wide and generous learning. In

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

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ethics, in philosophy, in rhetoric, in history, in many branches of learning and literature Moderate authors produced weighty works, which, if now completely forgotten, deserved the fame which they won in their day. But amid all this varied activity no conspicuous place was given to specifically Christian learning. While the other faculties in the universities progressed greatly, the Church was content to allow the faculty of Theology to lag far behind. In spite of its devotion to learning the age of the Moderates proved as barren in theology and kindred disciplines as any other period of Scottish history.

Throughout the country the standard of duty maintained by the parochial clergy was as excellent as at any other period. It is necessary to say this, because it has not been uncommon to depict the Moderate as a man of pagan mind and elastic morals, indifferent to the work of the ministry and addicted to the pleasures of the table. That there were Moderates of that type may be at once admitted; the same type has been found in other ecclesiastical parties. The average minister, however, did his work faithfully according to the methods of the day. Preaching, catechising, visiting the sick, taking oversight of the parish school, and administering the poor relief of the parish—in such matters there was no difference between the Moderate and the Evangelical. So far as the greater number of the clergy were concerned, the difference between the parties was not great.<sup>4</sup> Evangelicalism of the more pronounced type found a congenial resting-place in the Secession and Relief churches; but within the Church of Scotland Evangelicalism and Moderatism were often

<sup>4</sup> "And you, Mr. Pleydell, what do you think of their points of difference?"

"Why, I hope, Colonel, a plain man may go to heaven without thinking of them at all."—*Guy Mannering*, chap. 37.

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little more than slightly different versions of the same thing. Scott's description of the minister of Cairnvreckan in *Waverley* probably applied to a majority of the clergy. "I have never been able," he says, "to discover which he belonged to, the evangelical or the moderate party in the kirk. Nor do I hold the circumstance of much moment, since in my own remembrance the one was headed by an Erskine, the other by a Robertson." "I saw not one in the Islands," said Johnson regarding the clergy whom he met during his journey to the Hebrides, "whom I had reason to think deficient in learning or irregular in life, but found several with whom I could not converse without wishing, as my respect increased, that they had not been Presbyterians."

The age of the Moderates saw considerable improvement in the universities. Regents disappeared; and professoriates were established. The changes were not in any way due to the direct influence of the church courts. Outside the church courts, however, individual churchmen did much—no one more than Principal Robertson. In the matter of schools, the records of the General Assembly show with what constant care the Church pressed on the work of education in the face of much popular apathy and the frequent opposition of the landed class. In particular, the Highlands required all the help which could be given. In 1758, for example, it was stated that in the Highlands and Islands there were 175 parishes without either schools or schoolmasters; and the needs of a region, which had only recently been pacified, and which was still without roads, bridges, or piers, occupied much of the attention of church courts and parish ministers. The Lowlands were not in greatly better case. In spite of the Act of 1696 the legal provision for schools was not always

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enforced; and then, as now, presbyteries and ministers did not always carry out the instructions of the General Assembly. To enforce the Act would have required litigation; and the Church had not funds for that. Miserable as the schools were, and wretched as were the pay and status of the schoolmasters, they would have been far worse had it not been for the help of the Church.

To the Church fell also the care of the poor. Out of the meagre sums received in the church-door collections, and the interest accruing from "mortifications," ministers and kirk-sessions were able somehow to meet the barest necessities of the poor. It may be worth while also to mention the part played by churchmen in the development of Scottish agriculture. It improved at very different speeds in different parts of the country; but the influence of the Church was always cast into the scale in favour of improvement—no easy thing to do in the face of obstinate tradition reinforced by superstition. The glebes of Scotland were often the model farms, where experiments were tried and new methods were illustrated. Towards the end of the century Sir John Sinclair's monumental *Statistical Account* reveals the intimate relations between the parochial clergy and the social and economic life of their parishes. It discloses a breadth of outlook and an extent of knowledge on the part of the clergy which they have not always been able to maintain in later times; and those excellent qualities were shown by Moderate and Evangelical alike.

The age of the Moderates has left no more vivid document than the *Autobiography* of "Jupiter" Carlyle,<sup>5</sup> who was minister of Inveresk from 1747 to

<sup>5</sup> He got his nickname from his personal appearance—"the grandest demigod I ever saw," said Scott.

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1805. The book is a fragment. The author did not take it in hand until his seventy-eighth birthday; and he had not time to continue his narrative beyond 1770—"the pen literally dropping from the author's dying hand." The book is a lively description of the men and the incidents of its time. Of his own inner personal life, the sorrows of his home, or his labours as a parish minister the author tells us nothing—not because there was nothing to tell, as some unfriendly critics have supposed, but because he has apparently imposed upon himself a strict rule of silence. Inveresk was a considerable parish, and its minister had always plenty of parochial work to do; and though the *Autobiography* has much to say in its own racy fashion of going to Edinburgh, which was only a few miles away, or of journeys further afield to Rothesay or the Borders, to Harrogate or London, there is good reason for believing that such things did not occupy the space in Carlyle's life which they occupy in his book, and that he was a capable parish minister. Thus, in 1790, when nerves were a little on edge, and many excellent persons, including his friend Blair, suspected such institutions of being nurseries of sedition, Carlyle organised a Sunday school for his parish. His friend Smollett declared that he required "nothing but inclination" to be on a level with the most famous *literati* of his day. He was too fond of the society of his friends to be able to give much time to literature or learning; but the society which he loved put literature and learning at a far higher value than wealth or material possession. Posterity, however, may be thankful that, instead of spending his strength on a philosophical or historical work which would have been forgotten long ago, he has given us his lively *Autobiography*. If a man may be known from the company which bids him welcome,

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we may judge Carlyle from his intimates—John Home, David Hume, Robertson, Blair, Adam Ferguson—men of learning and integrity, whose names are a voucher for any one whom they admitted to their society.

Carlyle was the son of a country manse, in which life was less austere than in Borthwick Manse, the home of Robertson. He was accustomed to take part in certain minor relaxations, such as dancing and whist, without the searchings of heart which a stricter upbringing might have prompted; and in the Playhouse case of 1756 he was not only indignant but surprised at the storm which arose over an action in which it had never occurred to him that there could be anything censurable. He was entirely convinced that his was the true outlook on life. He was a child of the age of Reason; and for the spirit which did not accept the canons of the age he had nothing but scorn. "Fanatics"<sup>6</sup>—so he habitually called his opponents; and he regarded himself as doing a good work when he succeeded in obstructing or defeating them. "It was of great importance," he says in a characteristic passage which has already been quoted, "to discriminate between the artificial virtues and vices, formed by ignorance and superstition, from those that are real, lest the continuance of such a bar should have given check to the rising liberality of the young scholars, and prevented those of better birth or more ingenious minds from entering into the profession."<sup>7</sup> His choice of a profession was made with some difficulty; but when the step had once been taken, his reluctance vanished and no vain regrets were ever uttered. Thenceforth he belonged to the Church. We find him continually

<sup>6</sup> "Fanaticism" was evidently his *bête noire*; and Kay's excellent cartoon bears the legend, "The defender of the Church from fanaticism."—Kay's *Portraits*, i. 63.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 323.

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throwing himself into the advocacy of some cause which is wider than any personal interest of his own, and is as a rule something which he believes will make for the well-being of the Church. His ambition for the Church was that it should hold its rightful place in the life of the nation by its own intrinsic worth, without requiring to lean on the arm of rank or wealth or learning. For many years he led an agitation for the augmentation of stipends; and this he did because in an age of increasing prices it would keep the Church free from mendicancy. His opposition to the "fanatics" was not the opposition of a *bon vivant* disturbed by their scruples; it was the opposition of one who was thoroughly convinced that their influence was baneful and degrading to the Church. He supported patronage, because in his opinion it would secure the proper type of minister for the Church; and for that reason he would have nothing to do with "a very gross and offensive abuse," by which patrons of parishes sought to procure favourable judgments in the General Assembly by extensive hospitality. For a church guided by wisdom and knowledge he was prepared to do much. He would exalt its prerogatives, assert its discipline, and agitate for its proper maintenance. He rejoiced in the leadership of Robertson; for it had kept the Church independent of politicians, it had re-established freedom of debate<sup>8</sup> in the General Assembly, and it had restored the discipline and dignity of the Church. Carlyle was no ecclesiastic in the usual sense of the word. But he had a dream of what the Church might be and ought to be. His dream may be condemned as mundane; but it was not a whit more secular than the conceptions disclosed in the biographies of many Scottish

<sup>8</sup> In the pre-Robertson period, there was practically no freedom of debate. No one addressed the General Assembly except on the invitation of the Moderator.



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ecclesiastics—conceptions none the less secular because expressed in religious phrases.

With Carlyle's *Autobiography* may be contrasted the *Diary* of John Mill, minister of Dunrossness from 1743 to 1805. The two men are so different that it is difficult to realise that they were contemporaries in the ministry of the Church of Scotland; and Mill represents everything that Carlyle detests. Strictly, Mill's book is not a diary but an autobiography. The first part is a retrospect of some thirty years; the rest has been written, not day by day, or even month by month, but at irregular intervals, as opportunity and inclination dictated. The parish of Dunrossness, forming the southern extremity of Shetland, was remote and extensive, involving long and sometimes dangerous journeys by land and sea. Apart from geographical and personal details, there is nothing purely local in the *Diary*. It shows the physical difficulties of the ministry in a parish, in which, as in many northern parishes, distances were great and roads had not yet been made. It illustrates vividly the conditions of clerical life before most of the legal decisions which define the obligations of heritors had been obtained, and while the clergy had great difficulty in securing their patrimonial rights in the matter of the upkeep of churches and manses. The *Diary* is also one of many documents which show how in those days, when ministries were long and translations were few, the Church was represented even in her most remote charges by men of marked and weighty personality, whose influence sank deep into the life and traditions of their parishes.

Mill was an Evangelical. But his is not the benign Evangelicalism of Edinburgh, as preached, for example, by John Erskine. Mill's is the uncouth, fiery, intolerant spirit which Carlyle regards as nothing but fanaticism.

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Every activity of the human mind which is not professedly religious is suspect. Every incident, and especially every abnormal and alarming incident, is a direct, visible interposition of Providence; and Mill's pages are full of lamentations over the hardness of heart which makes his parishioners insensible to warnings and portents. "It grieved me much to find so little stir among the dry bones, the generality here and elsewhere being so immersed in the body and world that the most rousing sermons and awful alarming providences make no impression on their blind heads and obstinate hearts, though a pestilential fever that began in 1758 raged for several years, which, together with the smallpox in 1761, carried off upwards of 200 young and old; yet, alas, made but little impression."<sup>9</sup> Whosoever opposes him opposes the Lord and will meet with chastisement. A Jacobite heritor has caused much trouble over the building of the church and the payment of the stipend, but at last goes bankrupt. "This family had been inveterate enemies to the Gospel and its ministers, and though they are suffered to prevail for some time for a scourge to the wicked and to exercise and try the faith and patience of God's saints, yet the vengeance of Heaven overtakes them at last; their memories rot and perish with themselves. Thou puttest away the wicked as dross."<sup>10</sup> His brethren in the presbytery vex his soul. When he reproves "some things that were scandalous in their conduct," they send him to supply a vacant pulpit twenty-three miles away in January; and they obstruct him in his desire to start a prosecution for heresy. But his greatest antagonist is the Devil, of whose bodily presence he is continually

<sup>9</sup> Mill's *Diary* (Scottish Historical Society's Publications, Vol. v.) p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

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finding evidence. The Devil can take the form of a dog, or set up contrary winds upon the sea. He speaks through the mouth of an old woman; and he impudently presents himself at the Communion Table. But Mill is always ready for him, and puts him to flight.<sup>11</sup>

In 1770, following the example of earlier Evangelicals, he renews his Covenant Engagements in a document of thanksgiving, confession and consecration, duly subscribed in proper legal form. *Soli Deo gloria*, he often remarks devoutly as he records some pleasing incident. A sudden frost and snow detains him for a fortnight from visiting "the north parish," and when at last it is possible to set forth, he reflects characteristically, "O what cold and hunger the horses and sheep suffer for the sins of men! The whole world groans under the curse still—waiting for the adoption, e'en the manifestation of the sons of God, at the sound of the trumpet, when all will be restored to their original rectitude and purity, and death with the curse cast into hellfire." During the American War—an event which stirred considerably the dry bones of political life in Scotland—Mill's sympathies are against the colonists, thus agreeing with Moderates like Robertson and Carlyle, and taking the opposite side to John Erskine. He reads with interest the reports of the voyages of Captain Cook — "a large field for Christian missionaries," he remarks. In the later years of his ministry he welcomes the visit of Haldane to his parish, and supports the new and somewhat suspected cause of missions to the heathen. He goes four times to the General Assembly, his last commission being in 1768, when Moderatism was at its height. He finds, as

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xxxvii. The Devil was a real person to Mill. We have no means of knowing what he would have thought of his contemporary Burns' treatment of the Devil, but probably he never heard of the poet, and thought it sinful to read poetry.

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country ministers have often found, that the magnates of the General Assembly are not greatly concerned to defend the interests of brethren outside Edinburgh; but he reflects with satisfaction, like Mr. Micah Balwhidder, on the famous pulpits in which he has preached. Apart from the *Gasettes*, which he reads regularly, he makes little mention of anything that he has read; but to one of his school it would be sinful to read anything which was not religious. "The providence of God brought seasonably to hand several treatises saved from the flames [when his manse was burned] that proved of great use, namely, Godwine's *Child of Light walking in Darkness* — Allan's *Godly Fear* — Carmichael on *Mortification*, which doctrine I was much a stranger to at this time." The *Diary* of Mill and the *Autobiography* of Carlyle show that within the Church of Scotland, which many have supposed not to be very comprehensive, there was room for markedly different types; and the variety becomes even greater when we look into other writings, journals, or biographies of the period.

Much has been said, chiefly in scorn, concerning the preaching of the Moderates. Certainly theirs was a manner of preaching which differed widely both in style and substance from the preaching of former periods. The tradition which the Moderates discarded was preserved by such Evangelicals as Mill; and among the Seceders it was held so highly in honour that the slightest departure from it laid a preacher open to suspicion. This tradition dictated that a minister should preach for a year or more on a single text—his "ordinar"—and that each discourse should cover the whole area of Evangelical doctrine. Evangelical preaching was largely doctrinal, and could be accused, not without justice, of overlooking almost wholly the

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ethical teaching of the Gospel. It could be both uncouth and gruesome; and even men of the calibre of Thomas Boston or Ralph Erskine could speak with such elaborate detail concerning the torments of hell as to suggest that they relied largely on the emotion of terror. Such specimens of this type of preaching as have come down to us leave the impression that the Moderates did good service to the Church in breaking with that tradition. The revolt led, as revolts always do, to extravagances which were justly censured by many sound judges. The eighteenth century was the age of "eloquence"; and the Church, like Parliament and the Bar, succumbed to its influence. While the spell of Francis Hutcheson was still potent, many preachers could be guilty of a pretentiousness of language and a parade of philosophical learning which were not approved by many who had no desire to uphold the uncouth ways of the Evangelicals. "There was in Scotland at this time (1742)," says Sir Henry Moncreiff, "a class of preachers who, besides the absurd affectation of bringing their public instructions from Socrates, Plato, or Seneca, rather than from the morality of the Gospel, distinguished themselves by an ostentatious imitation of the doctrines and phraseology of Francis Hutcheson and the Earl of Shaftesbury. . . . It would have been unjust to accuse them of heresies."<sup>12</sup> "Jupiter" Carlyle, preaching in John Home's church at Athelstaneford, could be bantered by David Hume, who happened to be among his hearers, with preaching Cicero's *Academica*.

But by the time that Moderatism reached its zenith, the new wine was no longer new, and the extravagances of the earlier period were diminishing. Moderate preaching laid stress on what hostile critics called

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

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"cauld morality," and Evangelical preaching continued to be mainly dogmatic.<sup>13</sup> The Seceders took what precautions they could to defend their people and their ministers against "enticing words of men's wisdom"; but within the Church of Scotland both Moderate and Evangelical learned to give attention to such technical matters as language and construction. The earlier Evangelicals regarded it as a fault, if not a sin, to preach with the help of a manuscript: but many of their successors in the age of the Moderates composed with great care. It became fashionable to prepare volumes of sermons for publication; and though printing necessarily takes the sparkle out of a sermon, the published discourses of such men as Robert Walker of the High Kirk of Edinburgh, or John Erskine of Old Greyfriars, show to what excellence Evangelical preaching could attain. Here was something vastly different from the lurid declamations of an earlier date. Each of these preachers, as it happened, had for colleague an eminent Moderate. Erskine, as has already been said, was the colleague of Principal Robertson, and Walker of Dr. Hugh Blair, the most notable preacher of the day.<sup>14</sup>

"I love Blair's sermons," said Dr. Johnson, who was a man of warm and whole-hearted piety, and who found in Blair something which he did not find in other

<sup>13</sup> See Burns' *Holy Fair* for a satirist's description of the rival parties—the "cauld harangues" of the Moderate and the "tidings o' damnation" of the Evangelical.

<sup>14</sup> "The sermons of Blair and Walker and Drysdale and Logan are justly celebrated for their elegance as well as for their practical effect; and the church to which they belonged need not blush to produce them wherever the merit of sermons can be estimated. But none of these celebrated writers would have felt that his labours were degraded by a comparison with the theological morality, the acute discrimination or the practical effect of Dr. Erskine's discourses."—Moncreiff, *op. cit.*, p. 382. Moncreiff was the Evangelical leader of his day; and of the four preachers whom he singles out for commendation three were pronounced Moderates.

preachers. "Dr. Blair," he wrote to Boswell, "is printing some sermons. If they are all like the first, which I have read, they are *sermones aurei ac auro magis aurei*." Blair had been for many years in the ministry before his friend Lord Kames suggested the publication of a volume of sermons; and the book at once took its place as one of the most popular publications of the day. Johnson doubted whether the volume would be reprinted after seven years or after Blair's death; but in 1802, twenty-five years after the original issue, and two years after the author's death, it was found worth while to publish a new edition, enlarged to five volumes. The sermons were translated into many European languages. They were read by people of all classes, both of those who went to church and those who did not: and many English clergy paid them the compliment of reading them from their own pulpits.

As a young man, Blair found himself, after a few months in a country parish, in the Canongate Church, in those days a church filled with rank and fashion: and there for several years he drew round him a large congregation. The spell remained unbroken when later he passed on to Lady Yester's, and finally to the High Kirk of Edinburgh, the most prominent pulpit in the city, which charge he held for forty years until his death in 1800. In a city full of eminent preachers none was so eminent as Blair; and week by week throughout his long ministry the hideous High Kirk was thronged with a congregation drawn from the influential classes of Edinburgh — judges and advocates, lords and lairds, merchants and magistrates and university professors. He spent the whole week on the preparation of his sermon. If never very profound, it was always devout and practical, admirably constructed, and couched in

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grave and lucid language, such as no hearer could have any difficulty in following. He never used his pulpit as a platform from which to discourse upon the political and ecclesiastical topics of the moment. In this he followed the custom of his party; for one of the services of Moderatism to the Church was to teach preachers to concentrate upon the weightier matters, and to leave mere ecclesiastical controversies for other places than the pulpit. Being a Moderate, Blair spoke much on moral themes. The virtues and faults of which he discoursed were, however, not those upon which the ecclesiastical mind is prone to dwell, but were as wide as human nature itself—fortitude, patience, envy, censoriousness, and the like. We look in vain in those calm sermons for the familiar catchwords of Evangelicalism: but it is wholly an error to imagine that Blair was ignorant of, or indifferent to the Gospel.<sup>15</sup> So much the sermons show. He was a child of the age of Reason, as were also his hearers and readers; and we must not therefore expect to find the passion, the urgency, the sense of mystery which distinguished the sermons of the age of Romance, and which would have seemed to Blair and his congregation mere foolishness. If we make the necessary allowances for the difference of personality and the difference of their times, it is interesting to set Blair's sermon *On the Disorders of the Passions* alongside of Chalmers' sermon *On the Expulsive Power of a New Affection*. The two preachers are dealing with the same moral problem, and at rock-bottom come to the same conclusion; and the difference between them is less a difference of substance than of manner. Neither preacher would have cast any spell in the period of the other.

<sup>15</sup> Blair was the author of the 44th Paraphrase—which was a favourite with Dr. Andrew Thomson of St. George's, Edinburgh, leader of the Evangelicals of the generation after Blair.



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The church in which Blair's sermons were preached was one of the sections into which St. Giles was then divided, and like most places of worship was kept in a disgraceful condition. The parish churches of the period were as a rule of the meanest description; and if this was due in the first instance to the parsimony of the heritors, on whom the legal burden of maintenance fell, it sprang ultimately from a popular taste, or want of taste, which found nothing to offend it in a mean building or in the dirty condition in which it was usually kept. The age of the Moderates did little to improve the public worship of the Church. In church music some slight progress was made; and a precentor and singers were brought from York to the High Kirk of Edinburgh. The great Communion gatherings, which were so impressive a feature of church life in the early years of the century, had now degenerated sadly, and become as disgusting as religious pilgrimages in all ages have tended to become. In many places the Sacrament was the occasion of what was no better than a fair: and Burns' famous satire *The Holy Fair* gives a graphic and correct picture of its abuses. The Moderates had no sympathy with these saturnalia. Their influence was thrown into the scale in favour of a more seemly method of celebration. It is said that the poem did much to bring the custom<sup>16</sup> to an end; and if so, it was because it gave point and edge to what had long been urged by responsible churchmen.

Perhaps the best and greatest legacy of Moderatism to the Church was the *Paraphrases* — "the best collection of sacred lyrics, for its size, which has been

<sup>16</sup> But see Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, iii. 301, for an account of a celebration in a country parish in the early part of the nineteenth century.

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made in the English language.”<sup>17</sup> The collection in its final form<sup>18</sup> consists of sixty-seven pieces. Some of them are now quite unsuitable for general use: for the parable of the Prodigal Son or St. Paul’s Hymn of Charity are not improved, but greatly injured, by being translated into verse. Others—notably the series based on passages from the book of Job—are interesting reflections of their period—a period which took a mildly lugubrious delight in adorning its tombstones with emblems of mortality, and ornamenting its churches with cinerary urns. But when all exceptions have been made, there remains an appreciable bulk of dignified and noble pieces, well worthy of the place which they have won in the affections of Scottish church-goers. The *Paraphrases* were compiled by a committee of the General Assembly, of which the leading members were Moderates. Much of the work seems to have been done by Moderates, such as Logan of South Leith, a protégé of Dr. Blair, Morrison of Canisbay, or Cameron of Kirknewton. A perusal of the *Paraphrases* ought to dispel the opinion, loudly expressed in more acrimonious days, but less widely held now, that in the days of Moderate ascendancy the Gospel was obscured or ignored. The collection includes many compositions of Doddridge and Issac Watts, from whose hands come such paraphrases as the fifty-fourth and the sixtieth. Logan, Cameron, Blair, Morrison of Canisbay contributed much themselves, both in the form of original compositions and in the form of emendations which were nearly always improvements. Such paraphrases as the thirtieth, the thirty-fifth, or the

<sup>17</sup> Hepburn Miller, *Literary History of Scotland*, p. 379.

<sup>18</sup> The first book of *Paraphrases*, consisting of 45 pieces, was published in 1745. A revised version was issued in 1751. The present collection was first published in 1781.

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fifty-eighth—the work of members of committee<sup>19</sup>—are among the great religious songs of the English language. “Devout, dignified, and reticent,” says the writer quoted above, “they afford a truly admirable medium for expressing the religious feelings and aspirations of an intelligent, educated, and self-respecting people. Their genuine piety is untainted by extravagance, their grave severity unruffled by hysteria. They that seek for glitter and banality and noise must turn to the more comprehensive volumes of a later date, whence they will not be turned away.”

In the General Assembly the Moderates developed in the end a system of ecclesiastical administration which, more than anything else in their record, caused the name of Moderatism to stink in the nostrils of later generations. The forms of the Presbyterian Church, outwardly so democratic, do in point of fact make it possible for a coterie of party leaders to establish an ascendancy which cannot easily be distinguished from a tyranny; and not Moderatism alone, but all other movements in Scottish church history which have crystallised into ecclesiastical policies, have at last become intolerable for that reason. Moderate repressiveness has generally been associated with the name of Robertson. From the deposition of Gillespie until he quitted the field in 1780 he was the undoubted leader of the General Assembly, winning and maintaining his position by sheer intellectual and practical ability. The full effects of his policy did not,

<sup>19</sup> This is said, remembering the Logan-Bruce controversy—which is probably insoluble. Fortunately the controversy in no way affects the beauty and dignity of a very great paraphrase, the 58th. Nor does it affect the fact that the paraphrase is the work of the Moderate age; and if the honour of composing a noble evangelical poem must be denied to a Moderate divine, at least he and his colleagues deserve the credit of detecting the value of the piece, and of selecting it for use in Christian worship.

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however, become visible until after his retirement, when his mantle had fallen on smaller men. During the whole period of his leadership he had to deal with a keen and watchful opposition, which included not only Evangelicals but also Moderates who were not in sympathy with him, or who resented the supersession of Cumin. In numbers and talent the parties in the General Assembly were not unevenly balanced. There was freedom of debate, such as did not always exist at an earlier period; and the opposition to Robertson had behind it a large body of public opinion. He won by his sagacity and firmness; and as the result of his success those who came after him found the way smooth where he often found it rough. "The facility with which they have been able to conduct it [the Moderate policy] is unquestionably to be in a great measure imputed to the moderation and firmness united which eminently distinguished Dr. Robertson, and to the sound good sense and splendid eloquence which he uniformly brought to the subject in much more difficult times than they have had to encounter."<sup>20</sup>

Robertson's policy was simple. The chief need of the Church at the moment was government; and the General Assembly, being the supreme court of the Church, must not hesitate to govern. It was of small avail that the Church should have succeeded at great cost in asserting its autonomy, if it became a prey to internal disorder. The General Assembly was not merely a deliberative body. It had judicial and executive functions; and these it must exercise in accordance with the constitution of the Church. As the constitution included among other things the system of patronage, that system must be accepted and worked—no easy thing to do in face of its widespread unpopularity.

<sup>20</sup> Moncreiff, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

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From 1736 to 1784—and therefore during the whole period of Robertson's leadership—the General Assembly annually instructed its Commission “to make application to the King and Parliament for redress of the grievance of patronage in case a favourable opportunity for so doing should occur.” But no favourable opportunity ever occurred. In the political conditions of the day there was not the smallest practical hope of overturning a system which, though not ancient, had lasted for nearly half a century, and was growing stronger each year. Many in the Church had no compelling antipathy to patronage. Many detested it; but they had no political franchise, no constitutional means of making their desires known at Westminster. All that they could do was to make violent demonstrations of their principles at the settlement of a vacant parish; but as those demonstrations could only injure individuals and destroy the peace of particular parishes without in any way shaking the system, nothing was to be gained by giving too ready an ear to them. Robertson's policy accordingly was that a presentation, made by the undoubted patron of a parish, and accepted by a presentee, must be made effectual. His method was not unduly forcible. He was prepared to listen to everything that could be said. In the General Assembly he dealt with his opponents with a tact and kindness which won for him their deep personal affection. “He held it for a maxim never wantonly to offend the prejudices of the people, and rather to endeavour to manage than directly to combat them.”<sup>21</sup> When a dispute came before the General Assembly for decision, Robertson could be content to wait, sometimes for years, in the hope that popular antagonism might abate. But in the end the presentation made by the patron was confirmed.

<sup>21</sup> Moncreiff. *op. cit.*, p. 465.

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In the previous chapter, something has been said regarding the "call" of the congregation — an old procedure of the Church. The "call" became a battleground between Robertson and his opponents. Earlier in the century it had been the battleground between the Church and the Seceders. At that time, however, both sides agreed that the "call" was the basis of the pastoral relation between a minister and his people. The dispute at that time was about the signatories of the "call." The Seceders, and those whose opinions approximated to theirs, being inclined to attribute to the people a *jus divinum* in the election of their ministers, held that the "call" should proceed, not from heritors and elders only, but from the heads of families as representing the people of the parish. The majority were content with heritors and elders. Robertson's opponents, who for the most part had little in common with the Seceders, continued to maintain the principle that a "call" was necessary, though, like the earlier Moderates, they did not ask for more than the signatures of heritors and elders. They held that a defect in the "call" — a paucity of signatures, for example, or an evident lack of harmony in the parish — was a presumption against the appointment; and in coming to a decision on a disputed settlement they maintained that the "call" ought to be taken into reckoning. Robertson, however, found no practical value in the "call." He did not regard it as being so undoubtedly a part of the constitutional usage of the Church that no appointment could go forward without it. In the Covenanting period it may have been a practical necessity. But before the days of the Covenants its position was at least doubtful; and the Act of 1712 in restoring patronage had reduced the "call" to the rank of a kindly usage. As an expression

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of goodwill it might be welcome; but it had no other value. He pointed out that the law of the Church gave a definite opportunity to any one for lodging objections against a presentee on the ground of personal character or doctrine. To these alone he was prepared to listen; and he insisted that the objection must be such as to warrant a "libel."<sup>22</sup> The "call" was of no account; and though he was slow to depart from customary phraseology, he gradually introduced the word "concurrence" in place of the historic word "call."

Robertson retired from the General Assembly in 1780 for reasons which will be noted later. His mantle fell upon Principal George Hill of St. Andrews, who reaped the harvest which Robertson had sown. With the departure of Robertson the anti-patronage spirit flared up again for a few years, to the delight of Mill in distant Dunrossness. A certain stirring of the dry bones betokened that Scottish political life was awakening. An agitation, conducted from Glasgow, was set on foot to bring pressure to bear on Parliament: and during Fox's brief spell of power there was a faint hope of a friendly hearing from Government. But the time was not yet ripe: and in a short time the pendulum swung back again so far that in 1784 the General Assembly dropped its annual instruction to watch for a favourable opportunity to get rid of patronage.<sup>23</sup> The "call" indeed asserted its vitality. In 1783 it was reported that some presbyteries had been dispensing

<sup>22</sup> A "libel" is a formal indictment, definitely accusing a person of false doctrine or evil conduct. It has to be brought in proper form before a court of the Church, usually a presbytery. Once brought, it must be dealt with according to the prescribed procedure, until a judicial decision is reached.

<sup>23</sup> "Next day . . . without a vote resolved to expunge the Grievance against Patronage from our instructions to the commission. So that the Wild brethren are completely routed and Fanaticism has received a greater blow than ever it did in our time."—Letter from Carlyle to Dundas, *ap. Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution*, p. 39.

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with it altogether, and the General Assembly declared that the "call" was "agreeable to the immemorial practice of the Church and ought to be continued." The resolution made small practical difference. Robertson's policy had won the day. The General Assembly no longer found its time fully occupied with disputed settlements, as had been the case for so many years. "The bustle in Assemblies is in a great measure over; or a disputed settlement no longer creates any serious interest or division in the Church courts." Discontented parishioners ceased to litigate as they had done; and they found an easier escape from their grievances by passing over to the Secession or the Relief. But a General Assembly, set free from judicial duties, might have more time, and might acquire some desire, for the more important tasks of the Church; and something of this will be noted in the next chapter.

Robertson's policy was not altogether a matter of accepting the situation. In the previous chapter we have noted that he and his party were on the side of patronage for its merits. They differed indeed from the policy of the earlier Moderates in that they would not allow the Church to come under bondage to any group of politicians; and in this they rendered great service. There was a constant tendency on the part of the politicians to use their extensive patronage for purely political ends; and it was of much value to the Church that such leaders as Robertson and Hill steadfastly and not unsuccessfully resisted the encroachments of the politicians. That resistance was not easily maintained, because the politicians themselves, or their henchmen, sat as elders in the General Assembly. But the Moderates believed that patronage would supply the Church with a stronger clergy than any more popular method of election. Whether their policy was successful, even in their own day, may well be questioned.

Robertson's  
policy on  
patronage



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“Jupiter” Carlyle is disappointed to find that many prefer to obtain advancement by obsequiousness to powerful patrons rather than by their merits; but something of this sort has been visible under all systems, and not least under popular election. Fundamentally, Moderatism was oligarchic in temper. It had no trust in the people. Its temper was too literary, perhaps too fastidious, for that; and like many apostles of benevolence and knowledge, the Moderates were prepared to coerce others for their own good. It was the age of the enlightened despot. In many other lands, and on many greater stages than the Church of Scotland, autocratic methods were used vigorously in the interests of the governed without enquiring whether they gave consent or not. George III, Frederick the Great, Catherine II of Russia, Joseph II of Austria, were all of this type. Moderatism, which in its earlier stages was a genial, tolerant, and liberal tendency, making for a wider life and a sweeter atmosphere, became under the leadership of its noblest representative and largest mind a repressive ecclesiastical policy. As long as Robertson was in command, it seemed to succeed;<sup>24</sup> but with changing circumstances, and under less able guidance, it found itself at first embarrassed, and at last overwhelmed, by popular forces which it had never measured accurately or studied sympathetically.

Robertson's policy, so unswerving in operating the law of patronage, seemed to be less fortunate in dealing with cases of discipline; and he was accused of culpable laxity in dealing with moral offences. During his leadership the General Assembly had to deal with several cases of clerical delinquency of a very gross

<sup>24</sup> “The clergy of Scotland, the most decent and consistent in their conduct of any set of men I ever met with of that order, are at present much changed from the furious, illiterate and enthusiastic teachers of the old times.”—Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, i. p. 155.

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kind. It was said of Robertson that he acquitted culprits of whose guilt there could be no real doubt. Here, however, he was guided by the same principles which he followed in dealing with disputed settlements. The General Assembly was a court of law; and its decisions must therefore be in accordance with law. By its very constitution it was ill-equipped for judicial tasks. Its numbers were large; and many of its members did not have the opportunity of returning to it often enough to become acquainted with its forms. They were liable to be swayed by personal feelings or the opinions of their neighbours. The practice of the General Assembly was still in the making; and Robertson held that in matters of discipline the Church courts ought to act with the same judicial spirit as the courts of the realm. Judgment must be given in accordance with the evidence led, and not according to the personal opinions of the members of the court. The escape of a culprit, who did not deserve to escape, was a smaller evil than a decision obtained at the cost of wresting the legal forms and procedure by which the liberties of all were defended; and many have held that the greatest service which Robertson rendered to the Church was in fixing the principles by which its disciplinary functions should be guided.

In 1766 a great debate took place in the General Assembly on Schism; and this debate is one of the outstanding landmarks of the age of the Moderates. It was a pitched battle between the two parties in the Church, such as was not fought again for some forty years. It marked the decisive victory of the Moderates, as the next marked their decisive defeat. More important still, it revealed the existence of a conception of the Church, hitherto adumbrated only in the dissenting communities, but now securely lodged in the

W  
Schism  
defeat

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minds of the dominant party of the national church—a conception which shows how far the eighteenth century had travelled from the seventeenth, and which prepares the ground for the controversies of the nineteenth.

An overture<sup>25</sup> drew the attention of the General Assembly to the increase of “schism”—“an alarming evil, which hath so threatening an aspect to this church, to the interests of religion, and to the peace of the country.” The last phrase is significant. It suggested that in the minds of those responsible for the overture there was a vital connection between the unity of the national Church and the well-being of the State. It was stated that there were a hundred and twenty places of worship belonging to the sects which had broken away from the Church, and that more than a hundred thousand persons were connected with them. A committee was appointed to consider the overture; and it recommended that the General Assembly should correspond on the subject with presbyteries, and with “gentlemen of property and influence.” It recommended also that measures should be set on foot to remedy the “great evil” of patronage. The debate was long, and was conducted on both sides in an admirable spirit, though Robertson thought, and openly declared, that some of the promoters of the overture were actuated chiefly by personal antagonism to himself. Led by him, the Moderates threw their weight into the scale against the overture, and won the day by 99 votes to 85. Accordingly no action was taken.

The growth of the dissenting communities was not due altogether to dissatisfaction with Moderate policy. Undoubtedly that was a contributory cause, which often

<sup>25</sup> An overture—a word imported into Scotland from the Huguenot Church—is the form by which a subordinate court or a group of members of the General Assembly introduces a specific piece of business to the notice of the General Assembly.

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roused into activity feelings which would otherwise have remained inert. Every local dispute—and not all of these were concerned with the settlement of vacant parishes,<sup>26</sup>—tended to drive individuals, sometimes in considerable numbers, out of the Church of Scotland into the Relief or the Secession. Nor were those communities in any way reluctant to seize their opportunities. Where their aid was sought it was readily given; and many prosperous congregations were added to their list as the result of parochial disturbances. But the increase in their numbers was due largely to the rapid increase of population and wealth. Adherence to a dissenting church entailed financial obligations, such as were within the means of the prosperous traders and farmers who formed the backbone of both Secession and Relief, and who found the democratic life of those communities more congenial than the atmosphere of the National Church. The division of the Secession into Burghers and Anti-Burghers multiplied their places of worship, two having arisen in many places where one had formerly sufficed; and Burghers, Anti-Burghers, and Relief competed as merrily with one another as with the Church of Scotland. The growth of commerce and industry brought into existence masses of population for which the Church of Scotland was unable to make provision. Its buildings were often too small, or too inconveniently situated, for the new towns and villages which were springing up, especially in the Scottish Midlands. The Church had not yet begun to be conscious of any need of extending her system to cope with the new requirements.

But of such things the Schism debate said nothing.

<sup>26</sup> It is said, for example, that several local disputes, ending in the creation of additional dissenting churches, were due to the introduction of the *Paraphrases* in public worship.

Nor did Adam Gib, the truculent leader of the Anti-Burghers, who published an indignant protest against the use of the word "schism." The term indeed has never been strictly applicable to any of the divisions of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, all of which have remained stoutly faithful to the fundamental principles of their polity. Gib had nothing to say regarding the religious needs of the expanding population. Like the Church of Scotland, he had not yet learned to think of such a thing. He was content to refer with satisfaction to the original causes of separation. For the rest, he repelled the suggestion which he detected behind the phrase which spoke of "the peace of the country," and laughed at the proposal to consult with "gentlemen of property and influence." Gib was unconsciously allying himself with the Moderates. The churchmen whom he lashed belonged to the party which was nearest to himself. The letter and the debate show that both Church and Secession had still to awaken to their missionary responsibilities; nor did the awakening come for many years. Neither Gib nor Robertson, neither the Seceder nor the Moderate, had in them the spirit of the propagandist or missionary.

*note*  
*Robertson on patronage*  
The overture was intended as a demonstration against patronage; and in the course of his speech Robertson roundly declared, as did others of his party, that patronage was not an evil thing, but a good, and much to be preferred to any system which put the election of ministers in the hands of the multitude. No attention at all should be paid to a popular opposition which arose from mere whim and caprice or from groundless prejudice; and if patronage sometimes brought an unworthy man to a parish, the remedy lay, not in demolishing the system of patronage, but in taking heed to that which lay entirely within the powers.

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of the Church, the admission of men to the ranks of the ministry. If the Church took care that no unsuitable person was licensed, no such person could receive a presentation. But the significant element in the debate was the attitude of Robertson and his party to the divisions which had taken place in the Church. The Moderates clearly did not resent the existence of "schism."<sup>27</sup> When they spoke of the Seceders, it was in language very different from that which the Seceders used concerning them. The Seceders, they said, were honourable and religious men who had displayed their loyalty in the days of the Jacobite Rising; and Robertson spoke of the deep impression left on his mind by a Secession preacher to whom he had once listened. It was no new thing to find divisions in the Church. Such things had always been; and any forcible attempt to suppress them had always widened the breaches instead of closing them. Men differed so greatly in temperament, education, and range of ideas that it was impossible to prevent divergence in religion; and it was in the moral world as it was in the garden, the beauty of which arose from the varied shapes, sizes, and colours of its flower-beds.

Here then, on the floor of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, opinions were stated by the dominant party which struck at the root of the Reformation idea of a national church. According to that idea, as has been said in an earlier chapter, the nation and the Church were co-extensive; and the interests of the nation as well as of the Church required that all subjects should belong to the national church and to no other. "Na uther face of kirk," said the

<sup>27</sup> "So far from believing secession and schism to be evils, I am inclined to think that they have been productive of beneficial effects."—Somerville, *Own Life and Times*, p. 86.

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Parliament of 1579, giving utterance to the doctrine which was held, not in Scotland only, but in all the countries of the Reformation. The Revolution Settlement of 1690 was based on that doctrine; but the Toleration Act of 1712 proved that the doctrine had been undermined and that in the eyes of the civil law it was possible for more than one church to exist within the nation. To the Seceders that Act was abhorrent; and when they broke away, they pointedly used the word "secession" to indicate that they did not regard themselves as organically separated from the Church of Scotland. But when they issued their *Judicial Testimony* and proceeded to execute all the functions of a distinct church, still more when they broke into the two separate bodies of the Burghers and Anti-Burghers, they were for all practical purposes accepting the doctrine of the Toleration Act. The Relief Church, being in its infancy, had still to develop its testimony; but it spoke of the relations between the civil magistrate and the Church after a fashion which Reformer and Covenanter would have denounced indignantly, if indeed their minds could have been capable of understanding such language. Now in the General Assembly itself it was admitted by the dominant party that differences in religion may lawfully exist, and that those differences may legitimately embody themselves in separate religious communities. The Reformation idea of a national church was not expressly disavowed. But it had ceased to exist. While men's minds had been occupied with other things, this idea, which governed all the political and ecclesiastical discussions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had fallen out of sight and out of mind.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DECAY OF MODERATISM.

AS has been said, Principal Robertson retired from the General Assembly in 1780. His mental vigour and physical health were still unimpaired. To outward appearance his policy had triumphed, and his personal ascendancy was as great as ever. In reality both personal ascendancy and policy were somewhat shaken by a remarkable "No-Popery" agitation which suddenly flamed out among all classes in Scotland—one of those outbursts of passion which always take philosophers and politicians by surprise. It was announced in the General Assembly of 1778 that the Government was on the point of extending to Scotland a measure already passed for England which set Roman Catholics free from certain disabilities; but by 118 votes to 24 Robertson, who favoured the Government measure, defeated a motion to instruct the Commission of Assembly to watch over the interests of the Protestant religion. The Government's proposals were modest. They did not open any public office to Roman Catholics, or enable them to sit in Parliament or town councils. They annulled certain statutes—none of them old, but some of them practically in desuetude—which made it illegal for Roman Catholics to buy, sell, or inherit land, to hold religious services, or to take any part in education. The Government wished to facilitate the raising of new regiments in the Highlands, some parts of which were largely Roman Catholic; for the American War was going very badly for Britain, and



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the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga made it a matter of urgency to obtain as quickly as possible a large number of new troops.

The action which the General Assembly refused to take was speedily taken by others. The Relief Church was accustomed to hold that the secular authority could not rightly interfere in religious matters, and that the communion table was open to all who "visibly hold the Head." But its doctrine of toleration did not include Roman Catholics; and its Synod instructed ministers to "exert themselves against the spread of Popery." The synods of the Church of Scotland passed resolutions, Abernethy Drummond, afterwards a bishop of the Scottish Episcopal Church, wrote letters, and John Erskine, leader of the Evangelical party in the Church, issued a pamphlet, and entered into correspondence with Burke.<sup>1</sup> "The Friends of the Protestant Interest" organised a campaign throughout the kingdom; and town councils, presbyteries, trades societies, every kind of association passed indignant resolutions against the proposal to repeal the Catholic disabilities. Considerable riots broke out in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Principal Robertson was accused of being a pensioner of the Pope; his house was threatened and had to be placed under military protection. No violence was done

<sup>1</sup> Burke was responsible for introducing the Bill into Parliament. His reply to Erskine shews that he was wholly unconvinced by the letters and pamphlets sent to him from Scotland. "I am by choice and by taste, as well as by education, a very attached member of the established Church of England. But it is as far from my wish as, I thank God, it is from my power, to persecute you, who probably differ from me in a great many points. I wish it were equally out of my power to persecute any Roman Catholic . . . . I think myself obliged in conscience to take my opinion of men's principles rather from themselves than from you. I keep at the same time my just weights and measures; and as I do not take my ideas of the churches of France and of Italy from the pulpits of Edinburgh, so I shall most certainly not apply to the Consistory at Rome or to the Sorbonne at Paris for the doctrines and genius of the Church of Scotland."—Moncreiff, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

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on the scale of the Gordon Riots in London; but the feeling of the country was roused so strongly that the General Assembly of 1779 declared that "a repeal of the laws now in force against Papists would be highly inexpedient, dangerous, and prejudicial to the best interests of religion and civil society in this part of the United Kingdom." The Government bowed to the storm and withdrew its measure.

Robertson accepted the situation. In one of his greatest speeches he explained his position. His personal opinions had in no way altered; but he recognised that it was impossible to legislate for the relief of Roman Catholics in face of the almost unanimous protest of the Scottish people. But where all other parts of the country raged against the proposal, Aberdeen, true to the tradition which made it hostile to the Covenants and at every other juncture set it in opposition to the opinions of the south, refused to join in the agitation. Principal George Campbell of Marischal College, who had already protested against the use of compulsion in religion in his *Dissertation upon Miracles*, published an *Address to the People of Scotland* in reply to the pamphlets of the "Friends of the Protestant Interest." "We exclaim against Popery," he cried, "and in exclaiming against it we betray but too manifestly that we have imbibed of the character for which we detest it. In the most unlovely spirit of Popery and with the unhallowed arms of Popery, we would fight against Popery. It is not by such weapons that God has promised to consume the man of sin, but it is by the breath of His mouth, that is, His word. . . . Christians in ancient times confided in the divine promises: we in these days confide in Acts of Parliament."<sup>2</sup> The funds which were being spent so

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, *Dissertation on Miracles*, etc. (ed. 1823), p. 489.

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lavishly on the agitation would be better employed, he urged, as contributions to the cause of supplying schools and teachers to the destitute parishes in the Highlands. The "No-Popery" agitation died down quickly after the obnoxious measure was withdrawn. The French Revolution and the Napoleon Wars made it impossible to re-open the matter for many years; and when it again arose it was supported by the representatives of those who had spoken and acted most strenuously against it in 1779.

Robertson's retiral may have been prompted by a shrewd sense that his hand was no longer so firm upon the helm as it had been. His explanation was in no way inconsistent with this. He looked forward with a certain dismay to a possible controversy regarding the relation of the Church to the Westminster Confession of Faith; and he did not wish to take part in that. He expected the controversy to break out in a few years; but his forecast was much foreshortened. Even as he retired, the movement was beginning which was to put off the possibility of any such controversy for a very long time. In political, intellectual, and religious life forces were beginning to work which, if they brought the Confession to mind, would prompt the Church to tighten rather than to relax subscription. For several years Robertson had been watching an active discussion in the pages of the *Scots Magazine* and elsewhere. It followed much the same lines as have been taken by the discussions of the nineteenth century. Should there be any such thing as a statutory test? Had a church the right to demand from its ministers subscription to any symbol? If so, what range of personal freedom might be found within such a subscription? The discussion went on to the accompaniment, which all such discussions have had, of angry charges of apostasy,

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infidelity, and jesuitry from those who trembled for the ark of the covenant. It was, of course, impossible for a man in the position of Robertson to take any part. If it were to become a practical question, as he feared, the leader of the General Assembly could not escape responsibility; and he had no mind to be immersed in any such problem. It would open up important and difficult constitutional questions, which were perhaps not always before the minds of those who carried on the discussion; for the Westminster Confession was part of the Revolution Settlement, and was one, and by no means the least important, of the marks of identity of the Church of Scotland.

It was thought by many, perhaps without warrant, that the discussion in the *Scots Magazine* was partly inspired by the hope of getting away altogether from the accepted doctrine of the Church; and in England and Ireland, as well as in Scotland, there were signs of a tendency to break away, not merely from Calvinism, but even from orthodox Christian belief. One sign of this tendency, it was alleged, was *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ* by Dr. William M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr (1786). The *Essay* was not intended by its author as a theological treatise, but for practical ends only. It was an endeavour to explain clearly the doctrine of the Atonement; but the cry of Socinianism was at once raised. Secession and Relief broke out in a loud chorus of criticism, not unmixed with a certain glee that they had found the Church of Scotland in error again; and the Burghers in particular published a solemn *Warning*, in which they examined the *Essay* very closely, and did not fail to make as much as they could of the failure of the Church of Scotland to punish the heretic. The presbytery of Ayr did indeed bring M'Gill to its bar, ostensibly on account

of his book, really because of some indiscreet utterances regarding the Westminster Confession; but he explained satisfactorily that he was no heretic, and expressed his sorrow that he should even have seemed to injure religion by a book which was intended to have precisely the opposite effect. The *Essay* was in no sense a landmark. It caused some local stir in Ayrshire, where the author was deservedly held in much esteem; and it is remembered to-day only because it brought Burns on the scene with a characteristic satire, *The Kirk's Alarm*.<sup>3</sup>

The age of the Moderates was, however, not well equipped for dealing with such a document as the Westminster Confession. It was not a theological age. With all their learning, as we have noted already, the Moderates gave scant attention to theology. Their rivals, being also children of the age, were no better. They were dogmatists rather than theologians; and their theological studies, such as they were, did not involve more than the exposition of an accepted system, which they regarded as sacrosanct. Where theology was not held in supreme honour, the provision for teaching it was not likely to be satisfactory. Thus, at St. Andrews University the theological chairs had long been regarded as comfortable retreats for elderly ministers, who came to their new posts at a time of life when they had no longer the physical strength or the mental energy to address themselves properly to their new tasks. In a period which tolerated pluralities, they

<sup>3</sup> Burns was not greatly interested in the merits of the controversy, though his letters suggest that he was not without understanding regarding them. He was moved more by personal esteem for the author, who was a man of pure and gentle soul. "If the prosecution which I hear the Erebean fanatics are projecting against my learned and truly worthy friend, Dr. M'Gill, goes on, I shall keep no measure with the savages, but fly at them with the *faucons* of Ridicule, or run them down with the bloodhounds of Satire, as lawful game, wherever I start them."—Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, November 4, 1787.

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were simultaneously incumbents of parishes and theological professors. St. Andrews was perhaps in worse case than the other universities;<sup>4</sup> but in none was the standard very high or the method very efficient. The Church of Scotland was content to wait for a very long time before evincing any real desire to organise a satisfactory system for the training of her clergy.

Allowance may be made for the partiality of an hero-worshipper; but his biographer is not wholly at fault when he regards the appointment of Dr. George Hill to the chair of Theology in St. Andrews as a noteworthy event in the annals of the Church. If so, it is the one event in Hill's career which entitles him to more than passing notice. He had already been for several years the leader of the Moderate party in succession to Robertson. In the previous chapter we have noted how he continued Robertson's policy in the matter of patronage. In every way he was a smaller man. He excelled as an orator: but his lucid and attractive speeches had neither the breadth nor the weight of Robertson's. His position at the head of the party was less secure, because the Edinburgh Moderates were jealous of the leadership of one who was not resident in Edinburgh. During a debate on the "call" (1783), it was possible for Dr. Macknight, their principal spokesman, to ally himself and his followers with the Evangelical party in order to defeat Hill; and on one occasion the leader was seriously rebuked because in

<sup>4</sup> "The professors rested satisfied with dwelling upon some of the commonplace topics of theology, with making desultory remarks upon the established system of divinity, or even with reading to the students as lectures discourses which they had composed for the instruction of the congregations to which they had officiated. When this was not the case, it was not unusual for them to enlarge upon those subjects of natural religion to which the attention of every man destined for the ministry is naturally directed in early life, and upon which an intelligent man can with much ease compose some general dissertations."—Cook, *Life of Principal Hill*, p. 215.

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an important negotiation he had not taken the advice of the Edinburgh group.<sup>5</sup> But whatever his deficiencies as a leader of the General Assembly, Hill did real service to the Church by his work in the chair of Theology. He broke away from the bad tradition which regarded the subject as of minor importance; and not St. Andrews only but the other universities of Scotland benefited much from his labours and his example. Unlike many of his predecessors, he studied his subject thoroughly, just as he had previously done in the chair of Greek. During his life he issued brief synopses of his lectures; and after his death his son, who later became professor of Theology at Glasgow, published his *Lectures in Divinity* (1820). "I am not sure if I can recommend a more complete manual," said Chalmers, who had himself been a pupil, though not an admirer, of Hill, and in the full tide of the Evangelical ascendancy used the *Lectures* as his text-book in his classroom at Edinburgh.

It has often been said that at the heart of Moderatism there lay a tendency to sit loosely to Christian doctrine. Undoubtedly the Moderates had none of the rigidity of the Evangelicals; and the charge against them has been made principally by those who regarded the slightest deviation from Calvinist orthodoxy as a sign of heresy, if not of apostasy. The truth is rather that, as has been said, the Moderates took small interest in theology. Their temper was philosophical and ethical rather than theological; and so far as they showed any doctrinal tendencies, they showed them more by their impatience with their rivals than by any endeavour to establish a different dogmatic system. Whatever may have happened with similar movements in other countries, the Scottish Moderates as a whole were not "heretics" in the proper sense of that much-abused

<sup>5</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

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word. "It would have been unjust," says Moncreiff, speaking of the followers and imitators of Francis Hutcheson, "to accuse them of heresies. Their peculiarities were adopted rather that they might be believed to be, if not original and profound, at least ingenious or fashionable thinkers than from any systematic hostility to Christian doctrine."<sup>6</sup> The one theological treatise of the period which has had any power of survival comes from the pen of a Moderate; and it shows no tendency to deviate from the traditional doctrine of the Church of Scotland. In the best sense of the word Hill was a Calvinist. So he described himself; and he was not reluctant to write in defence of Calvinism against the half-informed attacks which then, as in later days, have often been made against it, especially in England.<sup>7</sup> Lucid and complete, the *Lectures* well deserved the place which they held in Scotland as a manual of instruction for three generations.

Hill's lot was cast in days when many signs suggested that the age of Reason was drawing to its close. Even while Robertson ruled the Church, with an authority which year by year seemed to grow more secure, the heralds of a new age were becoming audible—fore-runners of influences which were fully felt only after his retirement. It has already been noted that the sceptical philosophy of David Hume undermined the foundations of rationalism. In reply to Hume came the philosophy of Common Sense—an accurate but unfortunate term which the philosophers used in a different sense from popular usage. The Scottish school of philosophy began with Thomas Reid of Aberdeen, who

<sup>6</sup> Moncreiff, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> "I do not undertake to vindicate all that Calvinists have said . . . I propose to be a consistent Calvinist."—Letter to the Editors of the *British Critic*, in Cook's *Life of Principal Hill*, p. 397.



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in 1764 published his *Inquiry into the Human Mind*—the first and most notable work of a philosopher who influenced thought far beyond Scotland. Like most philosophers Reid made small appeal to the general mind; but six years later his teaching was popularised by James Beattie, also an Aberdeen professor, in his *Essay on Truth*, a declamatory work of slight value, which, however, made its author one of the lions of literary society in London. Whether the Scottish philosophy made an effective reply to Hume will always be a matter of debate; but the point to be noted here is that the reply involved no rehabilitation of rationalism. It maintained that the starting point of sound philosophy must be the instinctive beliefs, which, though not logically demonstrable, are nevertheless real and indubitable, and must be accepted as the ultimate basis of faith and reason. The philosophy of Common Sense thus pointed the way to a conception of the Christian religion in which it no longer depended mainly on external "evidence," but on internal and spiritual truth. It vindicated the capacity of the mind to know truth, to describe it, and to put it into practice.

More potent than the writings of Reid or Beattie was the poetry of Burns—the voice of nature breaking explosively through the crust of long-established convention. His first volume of poems appeared in 1786. His rôle was that of an interested spectator of the ecclesiastical controversies of his day.<sup>8</sup> He was a

<sup>8</sup> Of the relation of Burns to the ecclesiastical life of his day more than enough has been said, seeing that it has not always been accompanied by adequate understanding of the church history of the period. He has been described, for example, as a doughty opponent of the Church, because of the tremendous satires in which he lashed the humbugs that he knew. Others have spoken of his resistance to "Calvinism"—a word which can apparently be used as a term of abuse by speakers and writers who have not made the attempt to find out what precisely it means. What Burns attacked was not the Church or any other institution, but corrupt individuals and evil practices within his own circle of observation—not Calvinism or any theological system, but sanctimonious antinomianism, an evil which has appeared under all systems.

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poet, not a theologian or an ecclesiastic; and though a great poet is of necessity something also of a prophet, such poems as *The Ordination* or *The Holy Fair* give expression not to the grave reproof of a moralist, but to the jeering humour of a satirist who laughed at the scandals which he witnessed. He gave utterance to a new spirit—the spirit which was leaving the age of Reason behind and making ready for the age of Romance. He was himself so much under the domination of his time that he used its vocabulary, and frequently tried to force his poetry into the conventional moulds. But in his greatest moments he shook himself free from all such things. He had something to say of such imperious nature that to express himself he took the words and things which came most readily to his hand; and with the aid of those simple instruments, which the *literati* disdained, he called attention once more to the fundamental things in human life, the mystery, the force, the inner passion of the soul. Life was not a compound of mannerisms and conventions, imposed upon man from without by those who knew what was good for him, but a spring welling up spontaneously, tumultuously, irresistibly from the inner founts of being.<sup>9</sup>

Burns was not alone. More widely effective through Europe at the moment, though now almost wholly forgotten, was James Macpherson, the author (or discoverer) of *Ossian*—also a herald of the Romantic movement. Gray and Cowper in England, Rousseau in France, were teaching men to set their faces in the same direction. Gothic spires were beginning to sprout out of classical porticoes, as if symmetry and convention

<sup>9</sup> The foremost literary critic of the day was Dr. Hugh Blair. Burns took the measure of the man at once; but it is to Blair's credit that in spite of his conventionality he detected immediately the quality of Burns' poetry. Wallace, *Life and Works of Burns*, i. p. 367; ii. p. 97.

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were trying to break forth into singing. Nor is it fanciful to find the same spirit at work in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), a book which gave a new orientation to political life. Smith wrote other books, notably *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a sacrifice at the altar of accepted opinion. But in the *Wealth of Nations* the real man finds utterance—his power of observation, his penetration, his sagacity, his vitality. It is a treatise on political economy, which deals with man in his relations as a member of a body politic; and it proceeds on the assumption that the ebb and flow of national life depend upon the needs, desires, and hopes of the individuals who compose the nation. As in the philosophy of Reid and the poetry of Burns, the determining element in life is found in what the Psalmist calls the "inward parts"—the soul of the individual issuing from its recesses in accordance with the necessities of its being in order to express itself and to establish relations. Philosopher, poet, and economist all portended the coming of a new age in which Moderatism and Moderate policy would be unable to survive.

The year of the *Wealth of Nations* was the year also of the American Declaration of Independence. The Declaration marked the opening of the age of democracy—an age which spoke of citizens rather than of subjects, and which established a new conception of the relation between the individual and the body politic.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In its forefront the Declaration stated as axiomatic that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure those rights governments are established among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter and abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

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Its statements struck at the root of benevolent despotism. To those who had been brought up in the Whig tradition its doctrines seemed strange and even monstrous. In Scotland, as in England, discussion waxed warm concerning both the definite grievances of the colonists and the general principles of the Declaration. Many local causes combined to draw the attention of Scotsmen to the American troubles. The outbreak of war brought about the collapse of the famous tobacco trade of Glasgow; and the city, which had grown through the American trade to be the second city in Scotland, was reduced to great straits. Scottish regiments were engaged in the long struggle; and casualties and recruiting had their due effect.<sup>11</sup> Political life had been dormant since the Union, but the war awoke it from its slumber. The fortunes of the war "became a principal object of conversation in every company, and often excited angry debates which impaired the pleasures of social life and weakened the confidence of friendship."<sup>12</sup> Sermons and pamphlets on one side or the other were issued in considerable numbers; and as a rule the Moderates took the side of the king, the Evangelicals of the colonists. As a result of the new born zeal for political discussion, demands

<sup>11</sup> "It belongs to the chroniclers of the realm to describe the damage and detriment that fell on the power and prosperity of the kingdom by reason of the rebellion, which was fired into open war, against the name and authority of the king in the plantations of America; my task is to describe what happened within the narrow bound of the pasturage of the Lord's flock . . . . About the month of February a recruiting party came to our neighbour town of Irville, to beat up for men to be soldiers against the rebels: and thus the battle was brought, as it were, to our gates . . . . The listing was a catching distemper . . . . which made me preach a touching discourse."—Galt, *Annals of the Parish*, chap. 17—a work which reflects with great fidelity the public opinion of Ayrshire in the second half of the eighteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Somerville, *Own Life*, p. 199. To this period belongs Skinner's famous song "Tullochgorum", written, as the author has told us, to appease the political rancours which were destroying private intercourse.

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began to be made for parliamentary reform. Even more insistent was a call for the reform of the burghs; for the town councils of Scottish burghs were exceedingly corrupt. As has already been mentioned, the anti-patronage cry was again heard in some volume in the General Assembly; but the agitation was led, not as formerly by presbyteries and synods, but by a society which aimed at putting pressure directly upon Parliament.

For the time being, however, all such uneasy stirrings were put to rest by the "Dundas Despotism." Henry Dundas became Lord Advocate in 1775. For the next thirty years he ruled Scotland with more than kingly authority. During that period he rose to high office—Treasurer of the Navy, Secretary of War, President of the Board of Control for India; but no promotion ever drove Scotland from his thoughts. His politics were simple—to get for Pitt, his friend and leader, a solid body of support from Scotland; and that support he made secure by his use of the wide patronage which he possessed. "The Pharos of Scotland," says Cockburn, losing his Whig prejudices for a moment in his partiality for a kinsman. "Who steered upon him was safe; who disregarded his light was wrecked."<sup>13</sup> In particular, he showered upon his countrymen appointments in India till there was scarcely a family of position in county or burgh which had not obtained a post. The stream of Scotsmen proceeding to India helped to modify a little the inveterate provincialism of their countrymen; and knowledge of India had some effect on the missionary enterprises which were set afoot in due season.

More important, if any one had taken the trouble to observe it, was the Industrial Revolution. It is difficult

<sup>13</sup> Cockburn, *Life of Jeffrey*, p. 74 (ed. 1874).

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to assign a date to what was not an event but an atmospheric change; but perhaps the opening of the Carron ironworks in 1760 marks the commencement.

While men were discussing other things, the Industrial Revolution took shape, altering habits and thoughts as they had never been altered before. The Lancashire inventions, and still more Watt's steam-engine made it possible to establish manufactures on a scale which had not previously been attempted. In Glasgow and the West a considerable cotton manufacture grew up to compensate for the destruction of the tobacco trade. Round the new mills a new population gathered, differing in many important respects from the peasantry from which they had descended; and both in religion and politics they propounded opinions to which older minds listened with uneasiness and even with alarm.<sup>14</sup> The commercial aristocracy of Glasgow, many of whom never forgot that they were descended from landed families, became conscious of the social pressure of a new type, the manufacturer, who was not always a Scotsman, whose social position was somewhat difficult to define, and who was apt to question things which had not previously been questioned. The development was naturally greatest in the Scottish Midlands, where lay the mineral wealth of the country; but Dundee, Aberdeen, even far-away Wick, shared in the progress of the period. Side by side with the growth of industry went on a rapid improvement in agriculture. A

<sup>14</sup> "But in the midst of all this commercing and manufacturing, I began to discover signs of decay in the wonted simplicity of our country ways. Among the cotton-spinners and muslin-weavers of Cayenneville were several unsatisfied and ambitious spirits, who clubbed together and got a London newspaper to the Cross Keys, where they were nightly in the habit of meeting and debating about the affairs of the French, which were then gathering to a head. They were represented to me as lads by-common in capacity, but with unsettled notions of religion."—Galt, *Annals of the Parish*, chap. 29.

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new type of both laird and farmer was to be found in many places, energetic and enterprising, very different from the indolent and superstitious agriculturist of an earlier date.

Only in the Highlands things seemed to be worse. After the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion, active steps were taken to improve the condition of the Highlands; but improvement did not always follow. Roads were constructed; schools and churches were built; endeavours were made to establish industries; and the Highland regiments opened a new career for many. But the population declined. Before the '45 the Highlands had probably more inhabitants than the country was capable of supporting. On the establishment of peace, great numbers went south to the Lowlands in search of employment: and the Gaelic churches of Greenock, Paisley, Glasgow, and Edinburgh commemorate the necessity laid upon the Church of making systematic provision for the large number of Highland immigrants who were flocking into the growing towns and who knew no English. Between 1763 and 1775 more than thirty thousand Highlanders emigrated to America, some of them, in their haste to escape from the misery of the home country, selling themselves as slaves to the captains of the ships on which they sailed. Cattle-rearing and, still more, sheep-farming became staple industries in the Highlands: but such industries did not give employment to many, and could succeed only in proportion as the population declined. The clan system was broken up. The chief was changed into a landlord, often an absentee. The nexus of cash payments was a poor substitute for the old ties; and former loyalties did not easily survive in face of a steep rise in rents.

But to those things neither Moderate nor

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Evangelical, neither Secession nor Relief, paid much attention until their eyes were opened by the French Revolution of 1789. It brought on the stage of European history a new force—the spirit of democracy which had already expressed itself in the American Declaration of Independence; and this it did with such explosive effect that almost in a moment it destroyed the familiar landmarks, the accepted ideas which had governed the social, political, and ecclesiastical life of Europe since the Reformation. It swept away for ever the enlightened despot with his plea that the object of government was the good of the governed; and it established the doctrine, already uttered in America, that sovereignty resided in the will of the people. The idea of authority, on which the power of the Medieval Church was based, and which had passed over at the Reformation from the Church to the territorial State, was thrown aside; and in its place came the rights of man, as expressed in the famous formula, “Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood.” In Scotland, as elsewhere, the effect of the French Revolution was immediate. Burns hailed it with delight. Principal Robertson watched it with sympathetic interest, and gave thanks that he had lived to see the dawn of freedom. Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* became a familiar book, especially among the new industrial class. It found its way into all parts of the country, and was even translated into Gaelic; and it won a welcome in many homes into which only theological writings had hitherto entered. Throughout Scotland the Revolution awakened into enthusiastic activity passions and hopes which had long been dormant. To many it suggested the need of the immediate reform of parliament and of the burghs; in many others it aroused larger hopes, too vague perhaps to be expressed plainly, but bearing



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issue in excited gatherings, in banquets at which the chief toast was the toast of liberty, and even in local riots. The new society of the Friends of the People gained recruits in hundreds, and organised branches throughout the country.

The governing classes were alarmed; and their alarm seemed to be justified when the French Revolution fell into the hands of the extremists. The execution of the French king, the Terror, the demolition of the old institutions of France, the suppression of the Christian religion, the denial of fundamental Christian beliefs, the abolition of Sunday, the evident determination of the leaders of the Revolution to get rid of everything which savoured of the old order, and to start afresh with a completely new framework of social life—those things caused real fear; and the fear grew stronger as the Revolution brought on a war in which Britain had to fight for its very existence. The Friends of the People aimed at political reforms which to-day seem harmless enough; but they affected a manner of speaking and conducting their meetings on the model of the Jacobins—a habit which suggested to many that their open advocacy of political reforms was a mask for dark schemes of revolution. Everything was suspected which brought men together after any unfamiliar fashion or for any new object; and innocent adventures, such as the new Sunday schools or societies for missionary enterprise, could be regarded as cloaking secret plans of sedition. As usual, fear gave birth to repression. Lord Braxfield, the Lord Justice Clerk, the strongest man on the Scottish Bench, seemed to be a saviour of society for the savage sentences which, with scarcely a pretence of justice, he inflicted on certain leaders of the Friends of the People. The Whigs were suspected of disloyalty: and as a

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consequence it was difficult for a Whig to obtain employment.<sup>15</sup> Workmen suspected of revolutionary opinions lost their employment: and any attempt at combination was put down. Even the banks could be infected so far as to hesitate to give credit to persons who were known to sympathise with the new ideas. To many it seemed as if the bonds of society were loosened, and that only the severest repression could save the nation from the evil spirits which were streaming upward from the abyss. As a result of this panic a spirit of intolerance crept into the national life, which continued after the panic had subsided, and which greatly embittered for a very long period both the political and ecclesiastical life of Scotland.

In such an age Moderatism proved helpless. It was decadent, maintaining a tradition without the vital energy of those who had created the tradition. To the panic-stricken it afforded no refuge; to the new democratic spirit it could offer no guidance. Its great days were over. The brilliant leaders of the previous generation were dead or aged; and "Jupiter" Carlyle, stoutly maintaining in a virile old age the principles of his earlier years, complained that the vacant places were being filled with men who trusted in wirepulling rather than in merit. The controversial methods of the period made it possible for wild charges to be made without regard for accuracy; and it is altogether unnecessary to take at their face value the envenomed words of the enemies of the Moderates. There was, however, ground for the accusation that many of the clergy were unduly absorbed in the temporal concerns of their office — a common

*Filed  
helpless*

<sup>15</sup> In 1796 Henry Erskine, the ablest member of the Scottish Bar, and a Whig, was deposed from the honourable post of Dean of Faculty for no other reason than his Whig opinions.

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*Moderatism  
entirely*  
phenomenon in the decay of a movement,<sup>16</sup> and visible at the time among others than Moderates. Moderatism had always been deficient in the propagandist spirit; and during the long years of its ascendancy it had made no attempt to bring the masses over to its side. It was too aloof, too academic to understand the desires which were now surging in the popular heart. It stood, or professed to stand, for culture, toleration, and enlightenment — virtues which have never been characteristic of democracy; and Moderatism cared little whether it won the popular approval or not. The new industrial population, less interested in ecclesiastical disputations than in the political and social hopes awakened by the French Revolution, gave an eager welcome to Tom Paine; and they made no attempt to discover whether the Moderates had anything to say that was worth hearing.

Nor had Moderatism any message of hope for those who were alarmed. It was remembered against the Moderates that in their ranks were some who had apparently drunk at the same well as Voltaire and Rousseau — teachers whose doctrines were bearing appalling fruit in France. Such a charge, it need

<sup>16</sup> Struthers, *History of the Relief*, p. 399. "The ministers [of Argyll] were many of them Socinian or Arminian in their sentiments. They were generally deeply immersed in farming, fishing, or trading in sheep or cattle." Part of this was due to the unsatisfactory condition of stipends. The rise of prices, which resulted from the wars of the period, depreciated stipends greatly; and stipends are always the last emoluments to respond to a rise in the cost of living. In many cases the value of their stipends had become so small that ministers had to rely mainly upon their glebes in order to provide for their families. Not until the Kirkden case (1779) and the Tingwall case (1786) was it possible to secure a legal augmentation of stipend in a landward parish. Burgh stipends were a little more elastic. Thus, between 1788 and 1814, the Town Council of Glasgow found it necessary on no fewer than four occasions to augment the incomes of the city clergy on account of the cost of living. In 1788 the Glasgow stipend was £165; in 1814 it was £400. The fact that Glasgow found it necessary to increase its stipends so greatly and so frequently will suggest the straits of landward clergy with less elastic stipends.

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hardly be said, was not true of Principal Hill and his henchmen. Indeed, no utterance of the period did more to allay fear than a sermon preached by Hill in 1792, and afterwards widely circulated. But the long discussions on the Confession of Faith had created an impression which was not easily removed; and when the heavens and the earth were shaken, men sought refuge in statements more positive than the vague tenets of Moderatism. The shelter which Moderatism could not give was not to be found in the Secession or the Relief. These held the orthodox beliefs in a sufficiently definite fashion; but they were less interested in proclaiming them than in tilting against the Church of Scotland and against one another. Their numbers had increased, because the population had increased; and they had now many large and powerful congregations. But their outlook was wholly sectarian. They cared less for the needs of the nation than for their own denominational interests. The Secession, in particular, was in fragments, each section intent upon its own testimony. To them, as to the Church of Scotland, the new age brought important changes; but their influence upon the national life was not great until they had thrown much lumber overboard.

Where Dissent was inadequate and Moderatism had fallen into decay, the hope of the Church lay in Evangelicalism, which now issued from its long obscurity. During the century it had changed much, in manner and object, if not in temperament. It was still characterised by "enthusiasm"; but the word had now a milder meaning and was no longer a term of reproach.

➤ The furious illiteracy of the earlier period had disappeared. Moderate environment had its due effect. From the Moderates Evangelicalism learned the value of eloquence and learning; and the sermons of such

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men as John Erskine or Walker were constructed on models which the Marrow Men would have denounced as "enticing words of men's wisdom." The earlier Evangelicals were much engrossed in questions of church government and discipline; but many of the later Evangelicals looked upon these things with indifference, and were chiefly concerned with personal faith or regeneration, matters which Wesley and Whitefield had taught them to regard as of supreme, if not of sole, importance. Wesley and Whitefield were often in Scotland; and though they created no new religious organisation, and were much grieved because they could not as a rule infect Scottish Presbyterians with the excitement which so often appeared in England, yet they taught the Scottish Evangelicals much — philanthropy, for example, or propagandism, or the importance of the individual soul. Lady Glenorchy in Scotland was the counterpart of the Countess of Huntingdon in England; and both in the General Assembly and in the parishes Evangelicalism broke out in new activities which would have been impossible fifty years earlier.

It had all its old faults. It was fiercely intolerant, aggressively dogmatic. It was true; it alone was true; and to oppose, to criticise, or even to doubt it was to incur the wrath of Heaven. Of those who did not accept its tenets it was accustomed to speak censoriously, bitterly, and on occasion calumniously. Such persons, it held, were devoid of vital religion; they had no knowledge of the Gospel—the word being interpreted to mean the Evangelical system of doctrine. But in the eyes of many who supported it those faults, if perceived, were counterbalanced by the fact that amid the ruin of all things its defiant affirmations gave protection from

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the storm.<sup>17</sup> Many of the later Moderates had lost faith in the office of preaching; and having composed sermons to suffice for a year or two, they were content to repeat them in rotation for the rest of their lives.<sup>18</sup> The Evangelicals on the other hand believed strongly in preaching. The empty churches began to fill. Patrons and town councils, coming themselves under the new influences, showed a preference for Evangelical candidates for vacant pulpits. The stern doctrines of Calvinism have always had their greatest power of appeal in times of dangerous upheaval; and so it was in those days. In a season of panic Evangelicalism spoke with authority. Its roots, however, went deeper than that. Romance was in the air. Wordsworth, looking back from later life upon the days of his youth, could sing regarding them, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive"; and in such a time Evangelicalism came with a stirring challenge to the heart and will, which kindled religious ardour and prompted to experiments and enterprises such as rationalism was constitutionally unable to inspire.

Thus, in 1796, under the stimulus of the new movement, a great debate took place in the General Assembly over proposals to take part in missions to the heathen.

<sup>17</sup> An observer of the period thus explains the Evangelical revival. "The Government and the owners of property became alarmed at the progress of French principles among their own people, and combined to resist them. Their great object was to rear bulwarks around the Throne for the protection through it of their own interests, and viewing the altar as the principal pillar of the state, they became zealous supporters of religious institutions and observances. I then saw individuals of great political influence, who for many years had never entered a church door, ostentatiously walking up and down the High Street of Edinburgh with their Bibles in their hands to attend public worship. Their efforts were successful. A vast zeal was instantaneously evoked and put in action, and serious impressions were communicated to the young."—Quoted by Hector Macpherson, *Scotland's Battles for Spiritual Independence*, p. 170.

<sup>18</sup> Even Principal Hill had only sermons for three years.—Leishman, *Matthew Leishman of Govan*, p. 173.

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The debate is of interest for more than one reason. It opened a new chapter in the history of the General Assembly. During the few years of the seventeenth century in which it was permitted to meet, its time was spent mainly on the defence of the Church against the Crown. During the eighteenth century its chief business was judicial—the hearing of “cases,” mostly about disputed settlements. With the debate on missions we enter a period during which, in spite of certain acute ecclesiastical controversies, the court has increasingly devoted its energies to the religious enterprises of the Church. The General Assembly is regarded, not only as a court of law, but as the proper body to direct those wider activities which can be carried on only through the united efforts of the whole Church. Its function is thus not only judicial and supervisory, but propagandist. That stage, however, had not been reached in 1796; and the debate arose over a proposal to support certain missionary organisations which were not directly under the supervision of the church courts. The General Assembly had therefore to consider not only whether missions should or should not be sent to heathen lands, but also whether these should be left to private and unofficial action or be brought under the aegis of the church courts.

Early in the eighteenth century Simson the “heretic,” like others who were addicted to philosophic speculation, had spoken of the position of the heathen with little more warmth than he showed over a suggestion that the moon might be inhabited. Like most of the churches of the Reformation, the Church of Scotland was slow to discover its responsibility to the non-Christian world. Nor need we marvel at this when we bear in mind that for all practical purposes there was no contact between Scotsmen and the non-Christian

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world until after the middle of the eighteenth century. But since Clive's victory at Plassy British power had greatly spread and consolidated in India. Scottish soldiers had served there; and there also, thanks to a willing patron like Dundas, many Scotsmen had found careers. The voyages and discoveries of Captain Cook did much to arouse interest in the uttermost parts of the earth; and it is suggestive to note how often reference was made in current discussions to Otaheite. The marvel indeed is not that missionary enthusiasm awoke so late in the history of the Scottish Church, but that it sprang up so quickly after Scotsmen began to have living acquaintance with the non-Christian world. The fire blazed up when William Carey, after much pleading with his co-religionists in England, went out himself to India (1793), and thereby quickened the enthusiasm of many Scottish Evangelicals. In 1795 the London Missionary Society was founded, having as one of its secretaries John Love, afterwards of Anderson Chapel, Glasgow, whose name has been commemorated in the famous settlement of Lovedale. Even in distant Dunrossness the new enthusiasm could be felt.<sup>19</sup> Missionary societies sprang up in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other important towns. The matter came before the General Assembly by overtures from the Synods of Moray and Fife, asking authority for collections throughout the Church for the "diffusion of the Gospel throughout the world." It was still the romantic age of missions, when their supporters appealed largely to the spirit of adventure, to the spell

<sup>19</sup> "In the largest and most populous of those isles called Owhyhee, where [Cook] lost his life in attempting to recover a pinnacle which the inhabitants had carried off, there are reckoned 150,000 inhabitants, and as many more in the other isles as amount to 400,000 in all—a large field for Christian missionaries."—Mill's *Diary*, p. 117. See also Mill's remarks on missions, written in 1797, p. 108, and on his petition to the Directors of the East India Company in favour of missions to Bengal, p. 111.



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of far-away places and strange lands. There was not yet the smallest real knowledge of the non-Christian religions; for the necessity for such knowledge could be discovered only by actual experience of missionary work. It was possible for a speaker to bracket the Indian and the Otaheitan, as if they differed little from one another; and the Evangelical conscience was spurred by the belief that all who died in heathen darkness must be eternally lost.

It is unnecessary to tell here the story of the famous debate. To Moderates like Hamilton of Gladsmuir or "Jupiter" Carlyle, it seemed a vain thing to carry the Gospel to heathen lands unless it had been preceded by education. "Philosophy and learning must in the nature of things take the precedence. . . . The apostle Paul preached, not to naked savages, but to the inhabitants of cultured cities." David Boyle, afterwards Lord President of the Court of Session, recoiled in horror from the thought of supporting missionary societies, because their religious zeal was probably only a cover for sedition. John Erskine, the aged and learned leader of the Evangelicals, with the dramatic outburst, "Moderator, rax me that Bible,"<sup>20</sup> recalled that Paul described himself as debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, and vehemently supported the overtures. Principal Hill thought the time was not yet ripe. He dreaded the prospect of missionary operations conducted by societies which were prepared to employ agents of many different sects. He did not move, however, to reject the overtures without heartily commending the motives of those who had brought them forward. His motion, which was carried by 58 to 44,

<sup>20</sup> The saying is possibly apocryphal. It does not occur in the only contemporary account of the debate, and depends wholly on the tradition which came down to Hugh Miller. Writing in 1818, Erskine's biographer, Sir Henry Moncreiff, who was in his day a leader of the Evangelical party, makes no mention of Erskine's part in the debate or of his interest in missions to the heathen.

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dismissed the overtures, but concluded significantly with declaring that the General Assembly "will embrace with thankfulness any future opportunity of contributing by their exertions to the propagation of the Gospel." The door was thus left open; and individuals continued as before to support missionary enterprises according to their inclinations. Hill's position was not greatly different from the Dissenting Churches. The Relief Church stated in general terms its approval of missions to the heathen, but emphasised at the same time the need to "water the wilderness and solitary places at home"; and forthwith it organised a mission to Argyll. The Anti-Burghers also expressed general goodwill towards missions; but they feared the influence of societies which would allow their ministers and members<sup>21</sup> to join with representatives of other churches in public acts of worship. Local and denominational interests were still too prominent to allow Scottish Presbyterians to see clearly the duty of the Church to the "regions beyond." Alone of Scottish churches the Burghers gave hearty official support to the missionary societies.

The new spirit, which was so full of zeal for work abroad, was chafing at the lack of elasticity in the Church at home. Since the Union of 1707 the population of Scotland had doubled; and all the signs portended a still more rapid increase in the future,

<sup>21</sup> "But considering the constitution of these societies, as formed of people widely different in their religious profession and communion, not only of private Christians, but of ministers meeting together in their official capacity; meeting together for acts of public worship; claiming a power in common of directing all the affairs of the missions; and some of them exercising the power of ordination also; the Synod judge that neither their own members, nor the people under their inspection, can in a consistency with their distinguishing profession as Seceders, and without danger of falling from it, publicly co-operate with these societies in their present state."—M'Kerrow, *History of the Secession*, ii. p. 50. Both Burghers and Anti-burghers had done much in the way of extending their churches in America and Canada.

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especially round the new mines and factories. But for all practical purposes the equipment of the Church remained as it was. The number of parishes, their boundaries, the size and location of the parish churches were, speaking generally, as they had been; and the constitution contained no provision for the creation of new parishes except by a legal process so complicated, difficult, and expensive as to be of little value. The only method yet devised to cope with the increase of population was the erection of chapels-of-ease — churches subsidiary to the parish churches, each with its own congregation and minister, wholly dependent for stipend and upkeep of fabric on the liberality of private individuals, and without any place in the ecclesiastical courts. As long as chapels were few, presbyteries acted according to their own judgment; and there was, in consequence, considerable diversity of practice. As they became more numerous, various administrative difficulties arose—the raising of funds, the creation and extinction of debt on the buildings, the titles to the property, the security for the minister's stipend, the relation of the parish minister to a chapel in his parish, and the like. It was alleged further—and the allegations were not always untrue—that in some cases chapels were arising, not to supply the religious needs of an increased population, but from personal antipathy to some parish minister, or from the desire of a group to secure for themselves the right of electing their own minister. Between 1795 and 1798 the General Assembly was much occupied with the question of chapels-of-ease; and in the eyes of the Evangelicals, especially those of the next generation, the decision of the General Assembly hampered the Church unnecessarily in making provision for the growing population. The debate turned in the end on the

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question whether the right of sanctioning a new chapel should lie with a presbytery or with the General Assembly. The Moderates won the day. No chapel was to be erected without the sanction of the General Assembly. As has been said before, the Moderates had no faith in popular movements; and presbyteries have always been more immediately responsive to popular feeling than the General Assembly. That distrust was re-inforced by the circumstances of the moment; for to many minds any popular movement, no matter how local, smacked of democracy and might be seditious. Further, in the history of the Church of Scotland any group or party, which has obtained ascendancy, has always shown a tendency to magnify the power of the central authority, which they command, at the expense of the subordinate courts of the Church, in which their authority is less secure. Tendencies, interests, and fears combined to obstruct a movement to make the Church capable of meeting its growing responsibilities; and forty years of effort were required, and a great disaster had to take place, before a means was discovered of equipping the Church to deal with the results of the Industrial Revolution. The Moderates had, however, won one victory more. It was their last.

Not the Moderates alone, but other sections of the Church and other churches besides the Church of Scotland, watched with dislike the evangelistic work of the brothers Haldane which first began to attract general attention in 1796. Robert and James Haldane of Airthrey, after some years at sea, came under Evangelical influence, sold their estates, and gave themselves and their possessions to missionary enterprise. The directors of the East India Company were, however, opposed to Christian missions, as being likely to disturb their relations with the natives; and in the case

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Of Robert Haldane their hostility was the greater because he was a known admirer of "French principles." Foiled in his ambition of serving in India, Haldane turned with zeal to evangelistic work at home; and in the course of a few years he and his brother carried out a series of preaching tours in which they traversed almost the whole of Scotland from Shetland to the Solway. In every place their procedure was the same. They attended the local church, only to find as a rule that the minister did not "preach the gospel." Later they convoked the people by a summons from the town-crier, and preached to them in the open air. Their doctrine was of the extreme type; and in their discourses they attacked those clergy, who failed to win their approval, in the virulent language which Evangelicalism has always been prone to use. Like many of the English Evangelicals of that time, they made their appeal almost wholly to the emotions, not to the reason or the conscience. They despised all art and science; and learning, even theological learning, was considered to be useless, possibly injurious, an earthly thing of no value to one who, being a Christian, ought to regard himself as a "mere passenger through this world." Their powers of speech and organisation were considerable. Much of their energy was spent on Sunday schools; and these, being new, were of course suspected of being nurseries of sedition. In Edinburgh and Glasgow they founded Tabernacles; and for their work in Edinburgh they obtained the co-operation of Rowland Hill, a clergyman of the Church of England, a boisterous and eccentric individual with the gift of real, if coarse, eloquence, who came to Scotland "to fire red-hot shots against the General Assembly and the General Associate Synod." In the wake of their tours sprang up many groups of admirers who for one reason

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or another were in revolt against the conventional religion of the day; and in many districts those groups were the seed-plots of Congregational and Baptist churches. mt

It was a new thing in Scotland that laymen should preach. In many eyes the preaching of the Haldanes and of the evangelists whom they employed seemed to be only one more fruit of the evil spirit of the times. Like all branches of the Reformed Church, the Scottish Church has always magnified the office of preaching. It has looked upon preaching as a weighty task to be undertaken only by those whose vocation and training have been tested and approved by the constituted authorities of the Church. All branches of the Church accordingly condemned the Haldanes for undertaking on their own authority a duty which no man ought to undertake save with the solemn and deliberate sanction of the Church. The Anti-Burgher Synod declared that lay-preaching had no warrant in the Word of God; and as the Seceders had always forbidden their members to take part in any religious ordinances except their own, the Synod further stated that no loyal member of their church could give any countenance to the Haldanes, or allow their children to attend the new Sunday schools. The traditions of the Relief might have led it to regard the Haldanes, if not with approval, at least with sympathy. But denominational interests had somewhat obscured the catholicity of the Relief; and the Synod unanimously enacted that no Relief pulpit should be open to any unqualified preacher. ✓

The General Assembly passed a similar Act. No person should be allowed to enter a pulpit of the Church of Scotland who was not a minister or licentiate. At the same time the General Assembly issued a *Pastoral Admonition* to be read from all pulpits—a document

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which reflects the apprehensions of the times. The *Admonition* was sent to all sheriffs and provosts as a hint that the powers of the law should be used — an indication that the document was inspired mainly by the fear, already expressed in the debate on missions, of subtle influences working underground for the disintegration of society. It spoke of the “unhappy nation of the French” diffusing its revolutionary ideas “like a pestilential vapour,” and warned the people against unauthorised preachers and teachers. “The name of liberty is abused by them, as it has been by others, into a cover for secret democracy and anarchy.” At a later period, when the storm was over and the alarm of the period seemed to be groundless, those proceedings in the General Assembly were quoted to the discredit of the Moderates. But in this matter the Evangelicals of the Church were at one with their rivals.

The Haldane movement was important historically as an outstanding manifestation of the new zeal which had been set in motion. If it did not shake, it alarmed all the Presbyterian churches. In a land whose religion had always been of the churchly type, it created a new variety of religious belief which sat loosely to denominational principle, even if by so doing it brought new denominations into existence. Like Whitefield, the Haldanes emphasised the doctrine of individual regeneration, and paid small heed to other parts of Christian doctrine. Like the missionary societies, they brought together people of different ecclesiastical connections and accustomed them to co-operate in religious and philanthropic enterprises. The Haldane movement was short-lived, and died away at last among its own domestic quarrels. It was marred by bitterness of speech, obscurantism, and fanaticism. It left no direct mark on the life of the Church. But it was one

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of the signs of change. Many years of division and controversy had still to pass over the Church of Scotland; but a tendency was clearly taking shape to count the external details of ecclesiastical polity as of less importance than the fundamental realities of the Christian faith.

— Moderatism came to its Waterloo in 1805. The Chair of Mathematics fell vacant at Edinburgh; and the final choice of the electors—the Town Council of Edinburgh—lay between John Leslie, a scientist who had lately won much celebrity by his work on the *Nature and Propagation of Heat*, and Thomas Macknight, minister of Trinity College Church, Edinburgh, who had formerly acted as assistant professor, and was not without reasonable proficiency in the subject of the chair. There was a growing opinion against the long-established practice which allowed a professor to be at the same time minister of a city church. Evangelicals were against it, partly because of a lurking suspicion of all learning which was not overtly religious, partly because they believed that the work of a professor reduced the pastoral efficiency of a minister. Dugald Stewart, on the other hand, the most illustrious member of the Senatus, was opposed to the union of offices as likely to injure the rising fame of the university; and largely through his influence the chair was given to Leslie. The presbytery of Edinburgh claimed that in all appointments the town council was bound to consult them and to be guided by their judgment—a claim which the Court of Session did not sustain. But an ancient ordinance, which had fallen somewhat into desuetude, required all professors to sign the Confession of Faith; and it was discovered that in a footnote in his work Leslie had spoken with commendation of Hume. By pressing this matter it might be possible to secure the



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post for Macknight. The presbytery was evenly divided; and the Moderates carried their point by a single vote—a significant fact in a city which had so long delighted to honour the Moderates. The case was carried by “reference”<sup>22</sup> up to the General Assembly. The merits of the case are of less importance than the fact that the debate was a pitched battle between the Moderates and the Evangelicals. The parties had last measured their strength in the debate on schism in 1766, when the Moderates carried the day. Now forty years afterwards they were defeated. In 1766 the combatants fought on a great question of principle; in 1805 all principle was forgotten among personal interests. Under the exigencies which from time to time press upon all political and ecclesiastical parties, both Moderates and Evangelicals spoke and voted in unashamed contradiction of their traditional principles. The Evangelicals championed the man who had spoken in praise of Hume; the Moderates stood for orthodoxy and the Confession of Faith. The debate went on with animation for two days. By 96 votes to 84 the Evangelicals won; and the reign of the Moderates was over.

In the same year came the impeachment of Dundas, now Lord Melville. He was acquitted; but his power was gone. For more than a generation he had been the unquestioned ruler of Scotland. The fall of so powerful a man “appeared like an interruption in the order of nature.” Nevertheless, like other impossible things, it came to pass. The day of the old order was at an end.

<sup>22</sup> In a “reference” a subordinate court asks for the opinion of a superior on some point on which it is uncertain. By an astute move Sir Henry Moncreiff, an Evangelical leader, dissented and complained against the “reference”; and this meant technically that the complaint had to be dealt with judicially before the “reference” was disposed of. The presbytery of Edinburgh was thus at the bar and disqualified from taking part in the debate; and the Moderate party was deprived of its chief speakers.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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THE first thirty years of the nineteenth century form one of the notable periods of Scottish history; and as far as the Church of Scotland is concerned, they belong to the Evangelicals. The old Moderatism disappeared. We look in vain for churchmen of the type of Hutcheson, Robertson, and Carlyle; such men had no successors, no imitators. The name of Moderate still continued; for there was a party which regarded itself, and was regarded by others, as the inheritor of the Moderate tradition. Throughout the period Moderate and Evangelical often arrayed themselves against one another. Conscious that they were fighting for a cause, Evangelicals complained that their opponents were in the majority; but in any collision of parties the initiative was with Evangelicalism, and Moderatism was on the defensive. The party conflict was sometimes keen; and the exigencies of the Disruption made it necessary afterwards to represent it as keener than it was. But in point of fact the parties did not differ greatly in doctrine or in practice. "My observation," wrote a Moderate leader in 1833, "entitles me to say that in the course of the last forty years there has been a gradual approximation, on the part of the clergy of what are called the two sides of our Church, to a closer resemblance of one another in all the great features of their public teaching."<sup>1</sup> Both in the ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> Inglis, *Vindication of Religious Establishments*, p. 232.

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policy of the General Assembly, and in the church life of the parishes, the standards of praise and blame were Evangelical standards. The conspicuous churchmen of the time were Evangelicals—Sir Henry Moncreiff, Andrew Thomson, Thomas Chalmers, Alexander Duff. From these men the typical Moderates were not separated by any impassable gulf—John Inglis,<sup>2</sup> for example, George Cook, or Duncan Macfarlane. These men were of weightier metal than has often been admitted; but the flowing tide was not with them. The two groups co-operated in many important measures; and Chalmers, the outstanding churchman of the period, owed his position in no small degree to the fact that in his nature Moderatism and Evangelicalism were blended.

At first the energies of the nation were almost wholly absorbed in the war against Napoleon. The fear aroused by Jacobinism subsided; and “instead of Jacobinism, Invasion became the word.” “After the war broke out in 1803,” says Cockburn, “Edinburgh, like every other place, became a camp and continued so till the peace of 1814. We were all soldiers, one way or another.” The soldiering, however, was but volunteering. The actual war was carried on wholly by the professional army; and civilians, though often garbed in military uniform, had opportunity to go about their ordinary business and to reflect upon those political hopes which had begun to stir during the American War of Independence. With the return of

<sup>2</sup> “A powerful and excellent man . . . . No strong adversary ever measured mind against him without feeling his force . . . . Deducting eloquence and the graces, he is a first-rate preacher. The fanatical taste of the age, however, has gone on diminishing his hearers till at last his church is nearly empty. Yet his almost bare walls hear as good, if not better, everyday sermons than are preached in any church in Scotland except by Chalmers.”—Cockburn, *Memorials*, p. 219.

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peace the floodgates were opened. The change from war to peace dislocated industry; and for years there was so much social misery, especially in the region round Glasgow, that many looked for a revolution to take place speedily. The remedy for all evils seemed to be reform—parliamentary reform and burghal reform. In 1830 out of a population of 2,500,000 only some 4000 had votes; and in the burghs, where the members of Parliament were elected by delegates appointed by the town councils, those councils were largely family concerns, hopelessly corrupt and as a rule deep in debt through cynical maladministration of public funds. Popular enthusiasm was stirred to heat by such incidents as the political trials of 1817, the Radical War of 1818, or the Pantheon meeting in Edinburgh in 1820; and the conduct of the trials showed that the methods of Braxfield were no longer possible.

The political controversy was carried on with extraordinary bitterness. "Not in the days of Knox, or of the Covenants was less regard paid than now to the sanctities of private life and social intercourse."<sup>3</sup> Under the Dundas "despotism" the whole political duty of Scotland was to return to Parliament a solid block of obedient Tories, and Toryism was therefore identified in the popular mind with everything which it was desirable to change. Round the Tory standard were gathered many of the most corrupt elements in the nation. But round it were gathered also some of the noblest spirits of the time. To their minds it represented all the generous emotions which are the salt of national life; and they turned with loathing from Whigs and Radicals as being disloyal to the constitution, lovers of turbulence for its own sake,

<sup>3</sup> Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, iii. p. 403.

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utilitarian, mundane, and irreligious. Such was the Toryism, for example, of Sir Walter Scott. Such also was the Toryism of the Evangelicals; for most of the Evangelicals were of the Tory party. To idealists such as Scott or Chalmers Toryism was the only possible politics. It appealed to the heroic and romantic instincts by which they were accustomed to order their daily lives; and it stood for those ancient institutions to which they attached supreme value. In the long and bitter struggle the Tories were at last defeated. The Reform Bill became law in 1832; and at the election which followed, the Tories retained only nine seats in Scotland out of fifty-three.

The period was also marked by a vigorous development of periodical literature. In part it was inspired by political controversy; but its real source was deeper, in the new intellectual and spiritual energy of which the political controversy was only one symptom. More important was the outburst of imaginative literature, the direct product of the Romantic movement. The notable works of the period were works of the imagination, not works of philosophy and history. All other names—and they are by no means few—become insignificant in the presence of Scott, the master-wizard who out of the trivial incidents of Scottish history and Scottish life wove spells which still bind the world. To Scott history itself was a romance, a record of noble adventure and generous emotion; and there was no greater romance than the story of his own country. The Protestant Reformation was now far enough away in time to make it possible to contemplate the medieval world with kindlier eyes; and in the medieval world, its architecture, its symbolism, its pieties, its humours, its quick sense of the supernatural, Scott found that which kindled the soul of an eager generation, acutely conscious of new liberty and new aspirations.

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The personal character of Scott was in itself an asset to the religious life of his times. His was a deep and genuine religion; and the piety, the reverence, the kindliness and simplicity of his nature found spontaneous expression both in his writings and in his life. He served himself heir to the Jacobite tradition, which by this time had shed its more sordid characteristics and had become a memory and a sentiment; and Jacobitism led him towards the Scottish Episcopal Church. He was brought up in the famous church of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, at the feet of Robertson and Erskine, both of whom he greatly revered. At one time he was an elder in the parish of Duddingston. In his household devotions at Abbotsford he used the liturgy of the Church of England; but though he attached himself to the Episcopalians, he never looked upon himself as separated from the Church of his father. His services to the spiritual life of Scotland are, however, greater than any denominational associations. To an age of new powers and new opportunities he brought ideals of beauty, dignity, and breadth, which in the end powerfully affected the religious life of many of his countrymen. This, it is true, was not immediately obvious. With the stricter sections of the Church, now in the ascendant, and already beginning to hark back to the severities of Puritanism, Scott fell under the suspicion with which such minds always regard the artist. They were inclined to regard the writing and reading of works of fiction as sinful; and though many of the Evangelicals read the *Waverley Novels* with delight, they did so with a certain secrecy, as if books of that sort ought not to be found in godly homes. *Old Mortality*, for example, aroused the anger of some; for they looked upon it, not as a work of art, but as a malignant attack

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upon the Covenanters! The straiter sect, however, though always vocal, has never at any time represented the main body of Scottish religion. The time came when its pronouncements declined in authority; and then it became clear from many manifest tokens, appearing sometimes in the most unexpected places, that Scott's "loud trumpet-call of truth" had not been sounded in vain.

The literary renaissance of the age of Scott differed from the eighteenth century in many important particulars; among other details, in this—that the clergy had practically no part in it.<sup>4</sup> The Evangelical movement made a sharp distinction between secular and sacred; and in its severity it frowned upon, if it did not actually forbid, all attempts on the part of the clergy to engage in literary tasks which were not strictly ancillary to their professional duties. In some ways therefore Evangelicalism narrowed the outlook and limited the sympathies of the Church. On the other hand, it established new standards of clerical zeal and industry. Particularly, it emphasised the importance of preaching; and the talents, which in the Moderate age might have been devoted to history or philosophy, were now employed upon the work of the pulpit. Understanding the importance of a proper academic training for the clergy, the Evangelicals improved upon the tradition created by Principal Hill; and the regulations regarding divinity students, which had fallen somewhat into neglect, were revised and enforced.

The Evangelical conception of the ministry found expression in the discussions on Pluralities. At all the university seats it had become common to combine the

<sup>4</sup> Two exceptions may be noted—both among the Anti-burghers—Dr. John Jamieson, whose *Dictionary of the Scottish Language* is still authoritative, and Dr. Thomas M'Crie, author of the *Life of Knox* and *Life of Melville*, of which the former in particular is notable.

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duties of a chair and a parish—a procedure which caused little comment while emoluments were small and the clergy were on the whole the most learned class in the nation. By the opening of the century, however, the universities—especially Edinburgh—were reaching a standard which made them less willing to depend for their professoriate on the parochial clergy of the vicinity. The Evangelicals came to the same conclusion in the interests of the ministry; and their plea was much strengthened when twice within a few years professors at St. Andrews were presented to parishes some miles distant and proposed to retain both chair and pulpit. In both cases the General Assembly allowed the settlements, but only after sharp debate; and in 1817 the Evangelicals at last succeeded in carrying a measure that no minister might hold a chair and a parish at the same time, unless the parish were actually within the university city. In 1823 Dr. Duncan Macfarlane, Principal of Glasgow University, was presented to the Inner High Church of Glasgow; and Chalmers fought vigorously against the appointment on the ground that a great city parish required the undivided attention of its minister. The matter was not finally settled until after the Disruption; but the agitation deserves mention as illustrating the Evangelical theory of the ministry.

Side by side with the endeavour to improve the training of the clergy went a new enthusiasm for education in which Moderate and Evangelical shared alike. A sign of the times was the parliamentary statute of 1803 which improved the status of the parish schoolmasters. The legal provision was indeed of the smallest; nevertheless, the Act was a landmark. It was based upon the earlier statute of 1696 which provided for a parish school in each parish. But that Act had never been fully enforced—perhaps because neither the



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Church as a whole nor its individual ministers had sufficient means to fight the battle of the schools in the law courts against the heritors or landowners, upon whom the statute laid the duty of maintaining the parish schools. Recommendations, injunctions, and Acts of the General Assembly were only partially successful—so partially indeed that there is room for doubt whether the tradition which speaks so highly of old-time Scottish education had any basis in fact, except in a parish here or there. With the nineteenth century came a forward movement. In 1824 the General Assembly set on foot its great scheme for erecting additional schools in the vast parishes of the North—the first endeavour which the Church made on a large scale to carry out an enterprise by means of the voluntary liberality of its members. The scheme commanded the support of both parties; but the leaders in the movement were two Moderates—Principal Baird of Edinburgh and Norman Macleod of St. Columba's (Gaelic) Church, Glasgow. The General Assembly schools played an interesting and valuable part in the social life of the Highlands. The work in the Highlands was, however, only an extension of the activity which had already borne much fruit elsewhere, especially in the large towns. There also the legal provision was quite inadequate; but of this more will be said when we deal with the work of Chalmers.

Missionary efforts at home and abroad have always kept in step with one another; and the same year, which saw the adoption of the scheme for Highland education, saw the beginning of the Church's missions in India. The memorable debate of 1796 deliberately left the door open for missionary work among non-Christian races when the favourable moment should arrive. That

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moment had now come. The East India Company had ceased to bar the door against Christian missions. ✓ When its charter was renewed in 1813, a provision was inserted permitting missionary enterprise in India; and the Church of Scotland had been one of the petitioners who secured that provision. It is worth while to note how completely Moderate and Evangelical were at one in the new enterprise. It owed its inception in no small degree to the urgency of Dr. James Bryce, the first Indian chaplain sent out by the Church of Scotland, a Moderate of the Moderates, who in the 'Ten Years' Conflict was regarded as the embodiment of the most uncompromising elements in his party. The atmosphere in which the motion was made was largely created by Chalmers, then professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, who imparted to his students and others much of his own enthusiasm. The motion of 1824 was made by Dr. John Inglis, leader of the Moderate party, who afterwards became convener of the committee<sup>5</sup> responsible for the management of the mission in India; and the first missionary sent out was the great Alexander Duff, an Evangelical *pur sang*, who attributed his conversion to Simeon. The story of the beginning of the foreign missions of the Church of Scotland is but one instance out of many that may be quoted to show that in all the major matters of doctrine and practice there was no deep division between the parties, and no ground for the absurd claim, often

<sup>5</sup> Controversial exigencies at and after the Disruption made it necessary to identify the Moderates of the nineteenth century with the Moderates of 1760, and to describe them as the foes of all religious advance. Extraordinary statements were made to the effect that they were all at heart hostile to missions. Yet Duff on publishing his book in 1839, when the Evangelical party had almost undisputed control of the councils of the Church, dedicated it to the members of the committee under whom he worked—nine men in all, of whom six did not “go out” at the Disruption.

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advanced then and afterwards, that one party was more religious than the other.

Meanwhile the Industrial Revolution grew apace; and in the difficult years which followed Waterloo it was the most immediately impressive fact in the social life of Scotland. Evangelicalism and industrialism had much in common; and in their struggle for ascendancy the Evangelicals received much support from the class which was rising to power and wealth through the growth of the new manufactures. Evangelicalism taught that the first duty of man was to concentrate upon his own personal salvation; and self-regarding doctrine of that sort harmonised well with the habits and motives of industrialism. This world was of no real importance; and therefore Evangelicalism, though abounding in philanthropy, had no social message. The world was a place of probation through which men passed on their way to eternity; and the primary necessity was to prepare for the future life, chiefly by the cultivation of the pious emotions. It would be an error to say that Evangelicalism had nothing to say regarding the duty which men owed to their neighbours; but the duty was regarded as consisting largely, if not wholly, in certain conventional philanthropies and in imparting religious instruction such as would prepare a man to die the death of a saint.<sup>6</sup> The rest of life could be given over to unrestricted competition and undisguised self-seeking.

<sup>6</sup> The biographies of the period, especially the religious biographies, gave much attention to the details of the death-bed; and this habit continued till far on in the nineteenth century. Thus, Dr. Patrick Macfarlan of Greenock, a typical Evangelical, writes a brief biography of his friend Dr. Thomas Brown, Moderator of the Free Church Assembly of October, 1843; and he devotes practically half of his space to the story of how Brown shewed "how a believer should die."

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With regard to such matters as the origin and the right use of wealth, the relation of the classes to one another or social justice the Evangelicals accepted the principles upon which the industries of the day were conducted. They spoke with laudable vehemence in support of the abolition of slavery; but they said nothing with regard to the factory system at home, or the conditions under which women and children were labouring in the mines and mills. From time to time the workers—"the lower classes," as they were usually called—broke out under the goad of hardship and even of destitution; and at such times they were roundly condemned, not only by politicians and employers, but by the popular religionists of the day.

Besides a new type of employer, the Industrial Revolution created also a vast new population of wage-earners. The towns grew rapidly, especially in the coal area. In particular, Glasgow grew to be the largest city in Scotland. In 1780 its population was a little over 40,000; in 1801 it had risen to 83,000; in 1820 it was 150,000. "In the very centre of Glasgow," writes an observer, "there is an accumulated mass of squalid wretchedness, which is probably unequalled in any town in the British dominions." In the cotton manufacture—then the leading industry of the city—the wages of men were fairly good. But throughout the city the average was low and precarious; and round the well-paid trades lay a great sea of underpaid workers—many of them women and children—who hardly ever rose securely above the level of destitution. Illiteracy abounded; and poor relief was in the kindly but ineffective hands of the kirk session, the members of which were drawn mainly from the employer class. Sessional funds consisted of the

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church-door collections<sup>7</sup>—somewhat impaired in recent years by the growth of Dissent—and the interest from mortifications. Relief was never adequate. In rural parishes or small towns such a system might work after a fashion, even with the wretched doles of threepence or sixpence a week; for the allowance could be eked out by begging, and the spirit of neighbourliness and “auld acquaintance” was always at work. But in Glasgow, where rural neighbourliness was unknown, the sessional allowances, even when they reached the dizzy heights of ninepence or a shilling a week, did very little to alleviate destitution. The misery, the ignorance, the squalor of Glasgow were too patent to be overlooked. How the Evangelicals set themselves to deal with such problems is best seen in the story of their greatest representative.

→ Thomas Chalmers was born in 1780 in Anstruther, the sixth of fourteen children, the fourth of nine sons of a prosperous “merchant” of the little burgh. In 1803 he was ordained as minister of the parish of Kilmany in Fife. In the earlier years of his ministry he regarded himself as a Moderate, and spoke with contempt of the “drivelling fanaticism” of the Evangelicals. The greater part of his energy was devoted to mathematics and political economy; and he held a post as a lecturer in St. Andrews, on which he spent five days a week—with all the more contentment because he found himself in an atmosphere of strife which was by

<sup>7</sup> In the days of Burns the standard contribution to the church-plate was a bodle—twopence Scots—the smallest current coin. “We maun draw our tippence,” he says in the “Holy Fair.” By the end of the Napoleon Wars, Scots coinage had disappeared from use, even for purposes of computation; and wages and salaries were reckoned in sterling. The standard contribution to the church-plate rose from twopence Scots to a halfpenny sterling—the smallest coin current—equivalent to sixpence Scots, but of less real value than the old bodle. This was contributed by all classes—lairds, merchants, and servant-girls.

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no means uncongenial to his pugnacious spirit. But within a few years of his ordination he passed over to the Evangelical side of the Church. It is doubtful whether he ever became an Evangelical at heart. The humanist in him was never overwhelmed by the pietist; and his pietism has often a suggestion of artificiality, as if it did not spring joyously from the inner depths of his soul, but had been caught by a sympathetic nature from the prevailing tendencies of the day. He learned to speak the dialect of the Evangelicals, and sincerely regarded their doctrine as the only doctrine which could safely be believed;<sup>8</sup> but he was never wholly conquered by their severe principles of conduct or by their relentless dogmatism. He taught himself to distrust his old secular ambitions; but he never purged them wholly from his heart, and the old combativeness remained to drive him with much joy of battle into various controversies, in which he engaged with little chivalry and with considerable asperity of speech. His temperament included a strong element of romance which made him a Tory in politics. Radicalism he abhorred; for he looked on it as an enemy to religion and personal freedom. He was accustomed to make vehement demonstration of his attachment to all the ancient institutions of the kingdom, the Throne, the

<sup>8</sup> "I was at that time (1805) more devoted to mathematics than to the literature of my profession; and feeling grieved at what I conceived an undue reflection on the abilities and education of our clergy, I came forward with that pamphlet to rescue them from what I deemed an unmerited reproach, by maintaining that a devoted and exclusive attention to the study of mathematics was not dissonant to the proper habits of a clergyman. Alas, Sir, so I thought in my ignorance and pride. I have now no reserve in saying that the sentiment was wrong, and that in the utterance of it I penned what was most outrageously wrong. Strangely blinded that I was! What, Sir, is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. But then, Sir, I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of time—I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity."—Chalmers, *Speech in the General Assembly of 1825; Hanna, Life of Chalmers*, iii. p. 78.

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Church, the hereditary aristocracy; and when George IV visited Edinburgh—the first monarch to visit Scotland since Charles II—not Scott, who acted as stage-manager for the occasion, showed more unbounded enthusiasm than did Chalmers as a spectator. Whether Chalmers can be called a man of religion may well be doubted. There is little in his life or his voluminous writings to suggest a “God-intoxicated” man, with the Word burning as a fire in his bones. Such men there were among his contemporaries, as we shall see; but Chalmers was neither profound nor creative, and was satisfied with the beliefs which were generally accepted. He was a man of action, not of thought; and such greatness as is to be attributed to him is therefore not of the supreme order. His genius was for administration; but that talent he put to such good usury that he determined the form and method of the church life of his countrymen for a century — an achievement perhaps sufficient to entitle him to the place which he has retained in the affections of all Scotsmen.

In 1815 he was translated from Kilmany to the Tron Church of Glasgow; and instantly the homely building was filled to its utmost capacity. The crowd was attracted by his “thundering, flaming, lightening” oratory—such oratory as had never been heard in Glasgow; and when it fell to him to take his turn to preach the midweek sermon, the merchants of the Trongate, then the principal centre of business, deserted their offices and flocked to the Tron Church. In this popularity Chalmers found little to satisfy him and much to disgust him. His church was full, but not with his parishioners. His hearers were drawn mainly from the prosperous commercial and professional classes, who lived in the well-to-do streets, and who alone could pay the considerable seat-rents imposed by

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the magistrates of the city. The Tron Church stood precisely in the midst of the most squalid quarter of the city, an overcrowded warren of filthy alleys, the inhabitants of which were almost wholly out of reach of the Church. Nor was the Tron Church peculiar in this matter. A similar tale could be told of the other churches in the city. Within the previous thirty years the population of the city had almost trebled; but not a single additional parish church had been erected.<sup>9</sup> The existing churches were occupied by the well-to-do; and whatever might be maintained in theory, the poor were for all practical purposes excluded from the Church. Their only link was the hope of obtaining some slight pecuniary assistance from the funds of the Church. What was true of the parish churches was true also of the churches of the Secession and the Relief. No one had room for those who could not afford to pay seat-rents; and no one cared.

From his infancy Chalmers had known the Scottish parochial system, in which all parishioners, poor or rich, had their acknowledged place. In Glasgow he devoted his weekday energy almost wholly to his crowded parishioners; and he was appalled at the contrast between the Tron parish and Kilmany. Ignorance, destitution, irreligion—these met him at every turn. The gap between the rich and the poor seemed to be widening; and ominous murmurs might be heard. Chalmers, as we have said, was a Tory; and for that reason he continually scourged the heartlessness and indifference which were allowing the social sores to fester with never an effort to heal them. With the

<sup>9</sup> One of many details which throws light on the church-going of the period, which was no better, and perhaps worse, than to-day. New churches were not built, because there was no demand; and in spite of the scanty accommodation, the churches were not always filled.



Whig agitation for political reform he had no sympathy; for he did not believe, as the Whigs did, that a mere improvement of political machinery would cure social diseases. With all his powers of oratory he warned the prosperous classes of the menace that lurked in the mean streets of Glasgow. He was the first, and for some time the only, churchman to see the significance of the Industrial Revolution for the life of Church and State. Of all the national institutions the Church, he strongly believed, had the best equipment for bringing sweetness and light to a turbid and bitter society; for religion alone had the power to heal the sorrows of the nation. In his writings on political economy and cognate subjects he insisted that the influence of the Church ought to be taken into account; for the Christian religion alone could contribute the creative spiritual force by which the amelioration of society might be achieved. When he had been four years in the Tron Church, the new church of St. John's was opened in the east end of the city, largely as the result of an agitation which he had fomented; and to it he was transferred in 1819. During his four years in the Tron Church he brooded over and expounded his ideas; during four years in St. John's he put them to the test of practical experiment. Those eight years in Glasgow gave Chalmers his place in the history of Scotland. Other great churchmen had earned distinction in literature or on the floor of the General Assembly; to Chalmers it was given to achieve greatness in the work of a parish minister.

In the next chapter we shall deal more fully with his conception of a national church. Here it is sufficient to say that it lay at the root of all his work in Glasgow. In Kilmany he had seen the working of the old Scottish parochial system; and his dream was to create some-

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thing similar<sup>10</sup> in Glasgow. In the Scottish burgh there was never more than one parish. If, as was the case in Glasgow and the larger burghs, there were several churches, they were regarded as being all churches of one parish. The ministers were colleagues; and the elders of the various churches formed together a single kirk session. The work of poor relief, being a duty of the kirk session, was administered by a large body which had little personal knowledge of the cases which came before it; and neither within the congregations nor in the much larger mass which lay all around the churches was there any spirit of neighbourliness and acquaintance. Chalmers maintained that to each church should be assigned a parish of manageable size, with its own minister, its own kirk session, its own school, its own apparatus for poor relief. The church should confine its energies strictly within its own parish. Thus it might become the radiating point of all the life of the parish, and its beneficent influence might be felt in every home. Harking back to Knox's famous scheme, Chalmers spoke of the preaching of the Word, the teaching of the young, and the care of the poor as the three essential activities of a parish church; and to those topics he returned tirelessly with little alteration of phrase in oration after oration, in book after book. He accepted the charge of St. John's on condition that it should have a parish of its own, quite distinct from the rest of the burgh, and that he should be put into a position such that he could confine himself wholly to the parish.

<sup>10</sup> "Visionary and impracticable," said Principal Lee of Edinburgh, who knew, better even than Chalmers, what it meant to labour in a really poor city parish. Chalmers went on the assumption that the poor were more or less stationary in their residence. To a certain extent that was true of the better-paid artisan, but not of the poorer, whose employment was irregular, and who removed their residence easily from one part of the city to another. In the course of six or seven years they might be resident in as many parishes.

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The darling of his heart was perhaps the least successful, certainly the least permanent, of his schemes — his plan of poor relief. Much debate was going on at the time regarding the question of a legal assessment for poor relief; for the old Scottish system was breaking down. It had broken down thoroughly in Glasgow, where the mass of pauperism was too large to be handled efficiently by such a body as the kirk session of the city; and pauperism was increasing. Chalmers threw his weight passionately into the scale against a legal assessment. He resolved to find a solution through the Church, through the working of a spirit of Christian neighbourliness; for he held that there was no balm for social sores equal to the spirit of neighbourliness which the Christian religion seeks to create. He organised a large staff of elders and deacons, each of whom was to superintend a "proportion" or district of the parish, and to make himself personally acquainted with every inhabitant. Herein he introduced to the Church a new conception of the eldership, an office which had hitherto been invested with few personal responsibilities. He undertook to maintain the poor of his parish from the church-door collections of St. John's. Each application for relief was to be investigated thoroughly by the elder of the district; but he was not to have recourse to the funds of the church till he had exhausted all possible resources of neighbourliness and personal effort. The aim was to help the applicant to help himself — to restore and maintain the spirit of personal independence. In two years the cost of the pauperism in the area of St. John's parish, which formerly had cost £1400, was reduced to £280 *per annum*. The system worked till 1837, fourteen years after Chalmers left St. John's; and it came to shipwreck, partly because

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no law of residence could be established as between St. John's parish and the rest of the city, partly because of the financial difficulties of a chapel-of-ease in the parish. It was said by some—apparently with a certain amount of truth—that the decrease in cost did not imply a decrease of destitution, only a more Spartan severity. In any case it threw the burden of maintaining the poor mainly on the poor; and the responsibility of the prosperous was limited to their individual standards of philanthropy. It was in some ways a noble experiment; but it could never have met all the needs of large industrial communities, and after the split in the Church it was impossible. It was tried in other parishes besides St. John's, not without a certain measure of success. But the weakness of the scheme was perhaps that it dealt, not with poverty, but with pauperism. It did not deal in any fashion with the social conditions which produced so large a mass of indigence; and it does not offer a great contribution to what still remains our gravest social problem.

More fruitful, though less widely remembered, and apparently less dear to his own heart, was his work as a pioneer in education. Before his day, such provision as existed in Glasgow for elementary education was of the worst and scantiest. Both quantity and quality were deficient. Anybody might be a teacher. If he had failed in everything else, he could always find a job in teaching. On the second day of his ministry in St. John's Chalmers set to work to raise money both for buildings and for the endowment of a schoolmaster. Ere he left the city he had erected two fabrics; and in one of these provision was made for the training of teachers. He kept in touch with Bell and Lancaster, the leading educationists of the day. He worked on lines similar to Dr. Andrew Thomson in Edinburgh;

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and remembering Thomson's maxim, "The school-master is the school," he took particular care in the appointment of his teachers. His schools were parochial schools. Children of the parish, and only they, were admitted, partly because there was no room for others, partly because he believed that by going together to the same parish school the children of the parish would acquire that sense of neighbourhood and acquaintance which would make the parish a spiritual and social unit. Among his henchmen Chalmers had David Stow, one of his elders, who afterwards did remarkable work for education in Glasgow. Chalmers' example was followed in other parishes. His work was not affected either by his departure from the city or by the Disruption; and it governed the elementary education of Glasgow until the Education Act of 1872.

The Sunday school was introduced into Scotland before the days of Chalmers; but he looked on it as part of the general system of education.<sup>11</sup> For his great Sunday schools he recruited a band of teachers from his congregation; and the teachers, like the elders, were to work on the territorial principle and supervise each a definite area of the parish. The object of his "agency"—for so he styled his army of teachers—was to break down the solid masses of paganism which were consolidating so rapidly. As the century wore on, the "agency" became a fruitful seed-plot. Out of it sprang in due course the new conception of a Christian congregation, not as an assemblage of hearers, but as an army of workers, undertaking not merely the work of Sunday schools but many other branches of church activity.

<sup>11</sup> For the place of Sunday schools in the social and educational life of the day—see Cleland's *Rise and Progress of Glasgow*, p. 227.

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Chalmers' third line of policy aimed at the erection of a great many additional churches, especially among those new populations which the Industrial Revolution had created. In this field, however, his chief work was done long after he left Glasgow; for his experience in building a chapel-of-ease for his own populous parish was not happy, and taught him chiefly what he ought to avoid. Not even in St. John's was he able to achieve his ideal of seeing the people of his parish in possession of their own parish church.<sup>12</sup> The working of his mind was seen in his famous sermon on the *Death of the Princess Charlotte*—surely the most extraordinary sermon ever preached on the occasion of a royal funeral. Loyalty was rooted in religion; but what profit was it for magistrates and citizens to make effusive demonstration of loyalty by attending an official service in the Tron Church, while they allowed the vast majority of the inhabitants of the city to sink into squalor and irreligion? If they really understood what loyalty meant, they would build twenty more churches in Glasgow without further delay. Chalmers' ideas at that time were not ecclesiastical. Perhaps all through his life the ecclesiastical interest was less to him than the national. The air was laden with change. Political controversy was at its bitterest; and on both sides many minds were playing with thoughts of

<sup>12</sup> Chalmers always rebelled in spirit against the system which excluded the poor from their own parish churches. In the Tron Church and in St. John's Church, being alike burghal churches, the seat-rents belonged to the Town Council, who were also liable for the upkeep of the buildings and the payment of the ministers' stipends; and being more interested in revenue than in Chalmers' parochial ideals, they fixed the seat-rents high, and allocated the seats to those who paid the price. The congregation of St. John's was composed largely of those who had "sat under" Chalmers in the Tron Church, and was possibly the wealthiest in Scotland. All that he was able to do for his parishioners was to hold a third (evening) service for them.

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violence and repression. In sermons and speeches, in articles, pamphlets, and books, Chalmers returned indefatigably to the attack. The only way to national well-being lay through religion. Let the national Church be properly equipped for preaching, teaching, and the care of the poor; and the nation would be saved.

But to the men of his time Chalmers was famous chiefly as the mighty orator to whom all must bow. Men of all classes and types agree in testifying to his power. He had none of the outward graces of the orator. He wrote in a curiously pompous and inflated style, always preferring a long word to a short. He read his manuscripts closely, following the line with his finger. He spoke with a Fife accent so broad as to be sometimes unintelligible. His figure was awkward and even uncouth; his eye was heavy; and he had no gesture, no beauty of voice. Yet we read how vast multitudes were held spell-bound, and how a gasp would go through the church as the preacher halted and relaxed the tremendous tension. Now that his words can be read only in cold print, we wonder where the magic lay; for here we find no grace of style, no profound insight, no gift of phrase or epigram, no soaring imagination. The famous *Astronomical Discourses*, which when published ran a race for "best-seller" with *Old Mortality*, are now unreadable. The secret of his power seems to be that he could clothe in his own overwhelming rhetoric the accepted opinions of his hearers. No one cared less than he for the favour of the multitude; but his sympathetic nature quickly responded to the influences of his environment, and his oratory—for he was an orator rather than a preacher—was a mirror of the prevailing opinions and sentiments of the time. For a generation or two

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Scotland was to be in the hands of the new *bourgeoisie*, the product of the Industrial Revolution. To such a class the conventional ideas and the resplendent eloquence of Chalmers made an irresistible appeal; and the reaction to the passion of the orator was regarded as religion. His spell remained unbroken to the end of his days. Whether in his pulpit in Glasgow, or lecturing in a college class-room, or speaking before princes and prelates in Hanover Square, or preaching in the open air at Banchory, there was no one like him ✓

In 1823 Chalmers left Glasgow for the chair of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews—thereby fulfilling an old ambition. In 1828 he became professor of Divinity at Edinburgh. In neither chair did he add anything to the knowledge of his subject; for he was neither a philosopher nor a theologian. His work was seen mainly in his personal influence on his students. For the rest, he continued the tradition created by Hill. At a period when in many important subjects the universities did not reach the standard of the higher schools of to-day, Chalmers did the work of his chairs efficiently, and aimed at making the training of divinity students more adequate than it had yet been. The Evangelical movement contained elements which, if unchecked, might easily have made a complete divorce between the Church and learning. If not himself a man of learning, Chalmers was man of affairs enough to understand its importance; and it is due in no small measure to his personal influence that later disciples of the Evangelical movement have engaged diligently in the pursuit of learning.

The age of the Evangelicals was marked by an increasing severity of manners and a steady hardening of doctrine. They believed that theology was static, and that no further development was to be expected



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or desired.<sup>13</sup> In this the Moderates of the day differed little from the Evangelicals. In other lands, England, France, Germany, voices might have been heard which betokened the coming of richer conceptions of religion and life; but hardly an echo was heard within the Church of Scotland. It was full of zeal, but not of light. It was sealed against external influences more tightly than at any other period. It was in danger of settling down into a complacent provincialism which would have separated it from many of the most valuable elements in Scottish life. Of the two parties the Evangelical was the stricter; but the difference was much less than has sometimes been supposed by partisans. Good judges could distinguish<sup>14</sup> the characteristics of the parties; but their resemblance was as visible as their difference. Both remained inflexibly orthodox according to the doctrinal system of the Westminster Confession; neither was prepared to tolerate any divergence. Not all the stormy eloquence of an Andrew Thomson or a Chalmers could conceal

<sup>13</sup> A remark, typical of the Evangelicalism of that day, was made by Dr. Dewar of the Tron Church, Glasgow, afterwards Principal of Marischal College, during the case of John Macleod Campbell before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. "Let it not be said," he remarked, "that in the nineteenth century there are new discoveries to be made. There are discoveries to be made in philosophy; but as to a revelation given by God, it is an absurdity to suppose it."

<sup>14</sup> "There is a most unfortunate distinction kept up in the country between moral and evangelical preaching. It has the effect of instituting an opposition where no opposition should be supposed to exist; and a preference for the one is in this way made to carry along with it an hostility or an indifference to the other."—Chalmers, *On the Style and Subjects of the Pulpit*—a very commendatory review of the very matter-of-fact *Sermons* of Charters of Wilton. *Tracts and Essays*, p. 318.

"Mr. Davidson is a strictly evangelical preacher in the modern and fashionable acceptation of the term. He rarely introduces into his discourses the praise of good works or any urgent persuasives to the practice of them; and when he does commend morality, he does it in a manner by no means calculated to make his hearers in love with it . . . . In fact, he never inculcates morality without making an apology for so doing, as if it were a thing out of place in the pulpit."—*The Aberdeen Pulpit* (1840), p. 7.

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the barrenness of the popular conventions; and not a few thoughtful and devout minds were turning aside from the Church to drink at other wells. In an age which was responding to so many stimulating teachers, to Gœthe, Schleiermacher, Wordsworth, Coleridge, or Scott, it was inevitable that in due course the complacent, unilluminated dogmatism of the Church would be disturbed; and, when that took place, Evangelical and Moderate stood up as one man to smite the innovators.

The most famous of all the Scottish cases of "heresy" took place during the Evangelical ascendancy. The chief victims—for there were several—were the two men who in that zealous and arid period most deserved to be called men of religion, men to whom religion was the very breath of life—John Macleod Campbell and Edward Irving. At one period the two men were thrown much together; but they differed, not only in the "heresies" of which they were accused, but in their personalities, their experience, and the after-effects of their teaching. Of Macleod Campbell it could be said that no sooner was he cast out of the Church of Scotland than his influence began to make rapid headway within the Church. For the next fifty years the most impressive school of thought within the Church of Scotland bore his stamp. Spreading as a leaven, his work took effect even among those who regarded the Church of Scotland as an evil thing, and prided themselves on being the most unyielding of dogmatists. Far down in the nineteenth century both the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church found it necessary to pass Acts concerning the Westminster Confession; and under the stress of circumstances they learned to speak of the Confession much as Macleod Campbell had spoken. Edward

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Irving was a more picturesque and arresting figure; and if he founded no school, and left no direct mark upon the Church of his country, he represented certain tendencies which throughout the nineteenth century determined much of the life and thought of the Church. Both Macleod Campbell and Irving made it plain that the Evangelical ideals of doctrinal exactness and professional efficiency were not in themselves sufficient. Behind the sky-line new forces were deploying for action, differing greatly from the combatants of the past. The new movement would give scant heed to old philosophies and venerable systems of divinity—not indeed denying them or even calling them greatly in question, but rather ignoring them. It would bring to an end the feuds of Scottish church life, not by composing them, but by bringing men face to face with problems, interests, and duties so wide and engrossing that local embroglios ceased to be of any importance. The new movement would look beyond doctrinal symbols to the truth and experience of which those symbols were products. It would return to the sources and occupy itself with historical and critical investigations. The Christian faith, it would once more be discovered, is not a code of law or a system of unalterable dogma, but an historical process, containing within itself the vital force which makes it capable of development. The religion of the Incarnation would be expounded as the one real social dynamic. Above all, the Person of Christ would be studied as He had not been studied since the age of the Councils. Not all of this was contained, even in germ, in the teachings of Macleod Campbell and Irving; but they were the pioneers in Scotland of a process which, gathering strength as it went, utterly changed the life of the Church before the end of the nineteenth century.

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John Macleod Campbell was the son of a Highland manse; and in 1825 he became minister of the parish of Rhu (Row) on the Gareloch. Early in life he came strongly under the influence of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, saint and mystic, whose *Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion* was described by Dr. Andrew Thomson as of a "dangerous" tendency. To questions of ecclesiastical organisation and dogma Erskine, like all mystics, was largely indifferent. "The element of the bird is the air"—such was one of his favourite quotations—"the element of the fish is the water; and the heart of God is Jacob Böhmen's element." Erskine's influence went far beyond Scotland. "Were it allowable," said one disciple, "to say, I am of Paul and I of Apollos, I should say, I am of Erskine." "I cannot think of God," said another, "without thinking of Thomas Erskine." Erskine lived at Helensburgh in the parish of Rhu; and his saintliness, his personality, his charm made themselves felt throughout the neighbourhood. As usual, he was said to be a corrupter of youth. Conventional minds were shocked at teaching so different from the stiff tenets of the day, especially when it found its echo and complement in the teaching of the young and devoted minister of the parish. Evangelical and Moderate were alike hostile; and in a short time Macleod Campbell found himself arraigned for false doctrine before the Presbytery of Dunbarton, from which court the case proceeded by the ordinary steps till at last it reached the General Assembly of 1831.

To Macleod Campbell religion was not a system of doctrine, but a conscious personal relation with God, who is the Father of all His children. The popular religion of the day degenerated easily into a commercial

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transaction. On a balance the importance of eternal interests was greater than the importance of temporal interests; and the impulse to the Christian life was found in rewards and penalties, eternal bliss and eternal loss. Macleod Campbell laboured rather to show the "intrinsic excellence and beauty of holiness and love." He believed that the Atonement of Christ was for all the sons of Adam—thereby placing himself in apparent contradiction to the Westminster Confession with its doctrine of Election. "I hold," he said at his trial, "the doctrine of Universal Atonement to be the doctrine of Scripture. . . . I hold and teach that Christ died for all men . . . that those for whom He gave Himself unto God for a sweet-smelling savour were the children of men without exception and without distinction." To this teaching he added a doctrine of assurance—not the assurance of personal salvation, as his opponents declared, but the assurance of the reality of God's love to the believer. In his own presbytery only one or two supported him. In the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, the largest synod in the Church, only one voice was raised in his behalf. Moderates like Dr. Hill of Dailly<sup>15</sup> and Principal Macfarlane of Glasgow, Evangelicals like Dr. Patrick Macfarlan of St. Enoch's, Glasgow, and Leishman of Govan, spoke against him. In the General Assembly he was condemned by 119 votes to 9; and the motion against him was moved by Dr. George Cook, the leader of the Moderate party.

All through the process the impression is left that the judges came to the consideration of the case with

<sup>15</sup> Son of Principal Hill, and afterwards Professor of Divinity at Glasgow. Principal Macfarlane was also minister of the Inner High Church, Glasgow (Glasgow Cathedral). Macfarlane was afterwards at Greenock, and was a prominent figure among the men of the Disruption. Leishman was the leader of the "Forty"—the Middle Party at the Disruption. All four were Moderators of the General Assembly.

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their minds made up. Macleod Campbell's teaching was unsettling; and ecclesiastics, helpless as usual in the presence of an idea, were well content to be rid of him. In the General Assembly the vote was taken after midnight at the close of a long day of discussion. Half the members were absent when the vote was taken, not expecting it to be taken at so late an hour; but there is nothing to suggest that the result would have been greatly different, had the decision been postponed.<sup>16</sup> For several years Macleod Campbell continued to preach to a congregation of his disciples in Glasgow. He never turned his back upon his "heresies," but rather remained in them and developed them, as may be seen in his great book, *The Nature of the Atonement*. He spoke, not of Christ "satisfying Divine justice," after the fashion of the Westminster Confession, but making confession to God on behalf of men. To God's condemnation of sin Christ says "Amen," and thus makes reconciliation possible; and this He does, not for a limited number, but for all men. During the nineteenth century this teaching permeated the Church of Scotland. In the middle years of the century there were no more arresting voices in Scotland than Principal Tulloch and Norman Macleod;<sup>17</sup> and they both acknowledged with thankfulness and without reserve their debt to Macleod Campbell. Evangelicalism was accustomed to hold that the

<sup>16</sup> Among the incidents of the trial was the verbal slip of Principal John Lee, Clerk of Assembly, the most erudite man in the court. Transposing his nouns, he declared that "those doctrines of Mr. Campbell would remain and flourish after the Church of Scotland had perished and was forgotten." Erskine of Linlathen was in the gallery and said to those beside him, "This spake he, not of himself, but being High Priest that year he prophesied."

<sup>17</sup> Macleod Campbell retired from his church in 1859. The congregation was dissolved; and he advised his people to attach themselves to the Barony Church, of which Norman Macleod, his relative and intimate friend, was then minister.

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Westminster Confession was an exact and complete transcript of Scriptural doctrine. In Evangelical practice its authority was equal to the Scripture. Macleod Campbell during the trial pled that the Confession was subordinate. It must be tested continually by reference to the Word of God. "The Church at no time has contained all the light that is in her living Head"; and it was not possible that any document such as the Confession could take rank with Scripture or be regarded as a limit beyond which there is no possibility of change or growth. Thus the old questionings, which had alarmed Principal Robertson, and which had been stilled for fifty years, were again making themselves heard in Macleod Campbell. Though they aroused much indignation at the time, they were later to have remarkable results in all the Scottish churches.

Edward Irving, watching the case from afar, spoke in his own solemn fashion of the "zeal and readiness with which they rush to overthrow such men of God as John Campbell." On him also the denunciations of the Church were falling. The same General Assembly, which deposed Macleod Campbell, gave instructions that, if at any time Irving sought to exercise the functions of a minister in Scotland, the presbytery of the bounds was to enquire into his doctrine. Next year it issued a definite injunction to the Presbytery of Annan, by which he had been ordained; and in 1833 he was tried and deposed in the church of his baptism and ordination. Again, there was no division between Evangelical and Moderate. The Presbytery of Annan was unanimous; and the leading part was taken by its one man of eminence, Dr. Henry Duncan of Ruthwell, an Evangelical, who earned renown as the founder of Savings Banks.

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It is not easy to affix a label to Irving. If he were a product of anything, he was perhaps a product of the Romantic movement; and his utterances often suggest an affinity with the Tractarians of the Church of England. In London he was on intimate terms with Coleridge, to whom with characteristic lavishness of speech he often expressed his deep and abiding obligation. A mysterious, unaccountable figure he was, with his commanding presence, his air of majesty, his apostolic manner and a certain talent for laying himself alongside all sorts of men, yet always after such a fashion as to leave the impression that religion was the one absorbing reality in his life. For two years he was assistant to Chalmers in St. John's; but neither Chalmers nor his congregation of prosperous burgesses ever understood him.<sup>18</sup> In 1822 he proceeded to London to become minister of the obscure Caledonian Church, Hatton Garden, and almost at once blazed forth as the most astounding orator of the day. At that time, as has often occurred after a period of earth-shaking, many thought that they were on the eve of some remarkable manifestation of Divine power. An awe-inspiring chapter of history, the French Revolution and the career of Napoleon, had closed; and the time was at hand for the fulfilment of the prophecies. Irving shared those expectations. He believed that the Second Advent was drawing near, and looked for a fresh outpouring of Pentecostal gifts upon the Church. Such was the burden of his speech when in 1822 he made an apostolic tour in Scotland and gathered such multitudes round him that at six o'clock in the morning the largest church in Edinburgh was too small. "Quite woeful,"

<sup>18</sup> If the news spread that Irving was to preach, the crowd thronging to St. John's would turn and go home. But if the wealthy *bourgeoisie* of the congregation did not care for Irving, it is said that the poor of the parish loved him greatly—much more than they loved Chalmers.



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said Chalmers, who watched the excitement with disapproval. To Irving's mind the Second Advent was no mere doctrine, capable of statement and proof. He saw it vividly, as an actual event close at hand; and he spoke with the rapture of a prophet, warning all men to prepare for the Day. Two years later, the region of the Gareloch, already deeply moved by the teaching of Erskine and Macleod Campbell, was stirred by a woman who "spoke with Tongues." Where some saw only the evidences of fanaticism, Irving saw the undoubted sign that Pentecost had come again. On his return to London he permitted, and even encouraged, the Tongues to break out in his church, to the disgust and anger of many in his congregation, already restless under the pontifical manner of their minister and the pitiless length of his services. For a time they endured the disturbance; but at last, finding all remonstrance vain, they took steps to eject Irving from his church. The babel was removed to another building; and thus originated the sect known sometimes, though erroneously, as the Irvingites, sometimes as the Catholic Apostolic Church.

*note* → Irving held the orders of the Church of Scotland, and was therefore subject to its jurisdiction. Probably the Tongues were the real cause of his condemnation; but the charge that was laid against him was that he spoke, both in his pulpit and in certain publications, of the Human Nature of our Lord after such a fashion as to cast doubt on His sinlessness. He was accused of asserting "the sinful corruption of Christ's human nature, and a rebellion in Christ's natural will to the Will of God." Such an interpretation of his teaching Irving repudiated with surprise and horror. He regarded himself as walking strictly according to the historic doctrine of the Church of Scotland. To that

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doctrine he was accustomed to declare frequently his undeviating loyalty; and twice each year he read to his congregation the Scots Confession of 1560, which he esteemed more highly than the Westminster Confession. Far from preaching any doctrinal novelty, he believed that he was declaring a truth which the Church had always held, and which all Christians would rejoice to hear. He held that Christ's flesh "was in its proper nature mortal and corruptible, but received immortality and incorruption from the Holy Ghost." "The great point at issue," he said, "is simply this, whether Christ's flesh had the grace of sinlessness and incorruption from its proper nature or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost." The popular religion of the day was apt in practice to think of Christ mainly as a factor in an accepted system of theology; and in its zeal for the system it was losing sight of the living Personality. It hesitated to think of Him as one "who was tempted in all respects like as we are, yet without sin"; and the endeavour to discern the lineaments of His countenance seemed like treading the holy places with sacrilegious feet. Irving bade men take note of the real Humanity of our Lord, whose flesh was "one with us in all its infirmities." The case was clearly one for brotherly conference and admonition, that injudicious statements, where necessary, might be corrected. But the Evangelical mind, always inclined to assert the fixity of dogma, made no attempt to discover whether it was dealing with a case of false doctrine or with mere imprudence and ambiguity of utterance. More gracious precedents were neither sought nor followed; and Irving was deposed. Yet in speaking as he did of the Humanity of our Lord, Irving was a forerunner of those who throughout the nineteenth century, in growing numbers and with increasing devotion, sought to see,

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or to re-discover, the historical Jesus. Thereby he was pointing the way to a more excellent conception of human life and human society, which would be more fruitful for social welfare than all the organised philanthropies of the Evangelicals.

While the cases of Macleod Campbell and Irving were proceeding, one man remained silent who of all men might have been expected to speak. Chalmers was the most outstanding churchman of his time, and held now the important post of professor of Theology at Edinburgh. His words were heard, his publications were read, as were no others. He knew both men. Irving had been his assistant, and his devoted and enthusiastic admirer. Macleod Campbell he had often met; and while the case was brewing he had consulted Chalmers. But Chalmers said not a word. It is impossible to think that he was afraid, save of his own inner thoughts; and of time-serving, the characteristic fault of ecclesiastics, he never at any time showed any signs. He had committed himself to the Evangelical school; and Evangelicalism held that to doubt, to criticise, or even to analyse its favourite doctrines was to run into danger of everlasting loss. But Chalmers had too large a soul to be confined to the rigid dogmatism of his associates. The humanism of his earlier years was never extinguished; and his silence may perhaps be attributed to a dim perception, which he was unwilling to acknowledge even to himself, that what his contemporaries described unhesitatingly as pernicious error had in it something which might indeed be subversive of that system of thought to which he had surrendered himself, but which might after all be true.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE VOLUNTARIES.

IN previous chapters we have noted from time to time how the Reformation idea of a national church fell out of sight during the eighteenth century. Its disappearance was not due to any conscious change of opinion. It was due rather to the fact that other interests were engrossing the attention of the Church; and the old controversies were forgotten. In the seventeenth century, as we have seen, Church and State were regarded as necessarily co-extensive. That period ended with the Revolution Settlement of 1690. Cameronians and Episcopalians stood apart from the Settlement. Sworn foes as they were to one another, they both represented parties which in their day of power had not hesitated to use every possible method of compulsion. For religious or political liberty they cared not a straw; but the refusal of the Episcopalians to conform brought on the Toleration Act of 1712. The recognition of the Episcopal Church as lawfully existing within the realm side by side with the Church of Scotland, the growth of Presbyterian dissent, the practical disappearance of religious questions from the political controversies of the day, the rise of Moderatism all tended to thrust out of sight the old politico-ecclesiastical conception of Church and State. It lingered among the Seceders, who long looked back to the age of the Covenants as the golden age. But in the Church of Scotland it disappeared almost wholly.

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The relation between Church and State, as defined in the Revolution Settlement, was taken for granted. It was neither studied nor explained; and in the famous debate on Schism in 1766 the dominant party could speak of the other churches without resentment, and could find a satisfactory analogy to the divisions of the Church in the flower-beds of a garden.

The old order, however, left traces in the administrative details of many localities — particularly in the burghs. For long no clear distinction was drawn between town councils and kirk sessions. Within a burgh, however many its churches, there could be only one parish and one kirk session; and the town council had as much to do with the internal affairs of the churches as the kirk session. Such a system was not at all to the mind of James Baine, the popular minister of the High Kirk of Paisley, who desired to separate his charge from the rest of the burgh<sup>1</sup> and to have a kirk session of his own. Even the appointment of so purely ecclesiastical an official as the session-clerk lay with the magistrates; and Baine was defeated in a law-suit on that point which he carried to the Court of Session. For that reason he broke away from the Church of Scotland in 1766 to become minister of the new Relief congregation in Edinburgh, and to be perhaps more than any other individual the means of making the Relief Church a permanent element in the religious life of Scotland.

Apart from its hostility to patronage the Relief Church was slow to give formal expression to any denominational principles. But as the years went past and its organisation consolidated, it found it necessary

<sup>1</sup> Herein Baine anticipated Chalmers, who accepted St. John's, Glasgow, on condition that it was made a parish separate from the rest of the burgh. Chalmers, however, was thinking of social welfare, Baine of ecclesiastical order.

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to explain clearly why it stood apart from the Church of Scotland. The relation between itself and the existing constitution of Church and State was subjected to frequent examination; and under the influence of ideas which Gillespie had learned from Doddridge, and of the writings of John Glas of Tealing, Relief apologists often affirmed that the civil magistrate had no authority within the Church, and that the Christian religion could not be furthered or upheld by the "absurd aid of the civil sword." Within ten years of the beginning, when its original three congregations had grown into two Presbyteries and it gave unmistakable signs of crystallising into a distinct and separate denomination, the Relief Church was severely attacked by the Seceders, who found that its liberal opinions were a standing rebuke to their rigid adherence to the Covenants. Under the necessity of replying to this attack, Relief principles received still clearer definition; and denominational consciousness became stronger. Even then the Relief spoke less of its hostility to the Church of Scotland than of its detestation of the Covenants—documents which aimed at enforcing religious uniformity by civil pains and penalties.<sup>2</sup> The war of pamphlets went on briskly for many years—the strongest utterance coming from Patrick Hutchison, Relief minister at St. Ninian's, who wrote with the greater vigour because he had himself been brought up as an Anti-Burgher and had all the characteristic enthusiasm of a convert.

How far the Seceders were moved by the pamphlets

<sup>2</sup> As late as 1839, in the Campbeltown case, it was possible for a litigant to plead that the original founders of the Relief held it as an essential article of faith that the state should maintain and endow the Church of Scotland. The plea was repelled by the Court on the ground that the tenet, though permissible as an opinion to be held by individual members, was not a specific article of the constitution of the Relief.

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of the Relief it is not easy to say. But on the morrow of the French Revolution it became evident that even their rigid system had been penetrated by the spirit of the times. Burghers and Anti-Burghers alike found that they had received "new light." The two sects followed different procedures; but both found themselves impelled by the same practical necessity to bring their cumbrous denominational manifestoes up-to-date. The new generation was subject to influences which the Secession fathers did not contemplate; and it had not the intense interest of earlier years in the details of the first rupture with the Church. By this time both bodies were successful going concerns, with property, traditions, loyalties, usages, all the outward and visible features of permanent institutions; and the experience of sixty years created an interest in the denominational organisation which was different from, and independent of, enthusiasm for the original causes of the Secession. The "new light" accordingly involved a re-examination of the Secession testimonies. In particular, it led to new views on the relation between Church and State, which were exactly contrary to the doctrines of the Covenants; and the form and matter of those new views were determined largely by denominational interests.

It is not necessary to give in detail the long and dreary story of the "new light." The Burghers revised the formula to be accepted by ministers at ordination; the Anti-Burghers rewrote their *Testimony*. Both found, what the Secession fathers did not believe, that the civil magistrate was without authority in religious matters; both condemned the existing connection between Church and State. Such opinions were admittedly difficult to reconcile with the received interpretation of either the Westminster Confession or

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the Solemn League and Covenant—documents which the first Seceders regarded as the very *palladia* of Scottish religion. If the Solemn League and Covenant was founded on anything, it was on the assumption that the secular authority ought to enforce uniformity in religion upon all its subjects in the three kingdoms; and the Westminster Confession, a document of the same period, drawn up under parliamentary supervision as a statement of the uniform belief which was to be imposed, expressly assigns to the civil magistrate the duty of “taking order” against errors in doctrine or worship. To both those documents the first Seceders declared their allegiance. Early in their denominational history, however, they became conscious of difficulty in adjusting such principles to their actual experience; and one result was the Breach of 1747 over the Burgess Oath. In due course both branches of the Secession spread to Ireland and North America, soils on which the domestic traditions of Scotland lost something of their authority; and the experience gained beyond Scotland reacted upon the denominations at home. In spite of their conservatism the Secession churches were affected; and they entered the nineteenth century with new convictions which pointed in the direction of the separation of Church and State.

But neither Burghers nor Anti-Burghers were unanimous. A split took place in each. A small but resolute minority protested against the “new light”; and the four Seceders of Gairney Bridge were thus represented by four distinct denominations. The Old Lights—for so they were popularly called—stood for the national recognition of religion, as the Seceders undoubtedly did. “This church and nation”—thus the phrase ran in many old documents; and thus the Old Lights believed. The Old Light Anti-Burghers



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protested against any finding which would set aside "the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers employing their authority in an active support of religion and the kingdom of Christ, and in promoting reformation (which was an eminent part of the testimony and contendings of the Church of Scotland in behalf of the reformation of our native land civil and ecclesiastical explicitly approved in the Secession)." The Old Lights thus put themselves in line with the principles declared in every important testimony of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation. Though they formed one of the smallest of sects, the Old Light Anti-Burghers believed that by their separation they were keeping the door open for reunion in Scotland. They regarded the "multiplication of sects and schisms" as an evil—significant words in a period which placed little practical value on ecclesiastical unity. They believed that the "new light" would perpetuate existing divisions. They cherished the hope of finding it possible some day to reunite with the Church of Scotland; and union with it was impossible upon any basis which did not acknowledge the duty of civil rulers towards the Church. Meanwhile the Old Light Anti-Burghers were content to continue as a separate organisation, holding by their old principles and "waiting for the time of healing." For separating in this fashion their ministers were deposed by the New Lights. Secession documents always spoke with indignation of the deposition of Ebenezer Erskine and the founders of the Secession by the General Assembly; but that which was a sin, when done by the General Assembly, was no sin when done by the Anti-Burghers. As in all cases in which deposition has been used as a weapon in ecclesiastical policy, the victims paid not the smallest attention to the sentence.

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Always less rigid than the Anti-Burghers, the Burghers tried to make it possible for both old and new to remain in their communion; and, when in spite of all efforts a split took place, they did not depose their departing brethren. That split, however, brought on certain important lawsuits in which Old Lights and New Lights contended at Cæsar's judgment seat—notably the case *Craigdallie v. Aikman*, which became famous both for its length and for the utterances of the judges. The Burgher congregation of Perth broke in two; and each section claimed the church and the property belonging to the congregation. The result was a lawsuit which went on for twenty years. In dissenting churches congregational property was held by trustees in trust for the congregation; and lawsuits had therefore to be decided in accordance with the law of trusts. In some earlier cases the Court proceeded on the simple principle that the property ought to go with the majority of the congregation; and in the *Craigdallie* case the judges were at first inclined to follow that principle, interpreting "majority" to mean, not a majority of members, but a majority of contributors through whose gifts the property had been created and maintained. Noting, however, that the congregation in Perth was under the jurisdiction of the Burgher Synod, the Court ultimately gave its decision in favour of the section which adhered to the majority of the Synod, that is, to the New Lights. The Old Lights carried the case by appeal to the House of Lords; and there the ruling was given that the tenure of ecclesiastical property held under the law of trusts must be determined by the original doctrines of the denomination to which the congregation belonged. The case was therefore sent back to the Court of Session to find which section remained faithful to the original

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doctrines of the Burgher Church. The Court of Session found that, "so far as they are capable of understanding the case," it was impossible to discover any "real" difference between the two sections, or any evidence of "real" deviation on the part of the New Lights from the original tenets of the Burgher Synod; and the House of Lords,<sup>3</sup> to which the case went once more, agreed with the Court of Session. The case accordingly went in favour of the New Lights, not because they were new, but because no proof could be given that they had departed from the original doctrines of their church. The Burghers had admitted the "new light" by the safe expedient of drawing up a formula which made allowance for difference of opinion, and did not weight the scales against those who preferred to walk in the old ways; and wisdom was justified of her children.

The Craigdallie case is of interest as the first ecclesiastical lawsuit in which the courts applied the test of the original doctrines of the denomination concerned—a legal principle which was to have considerable consequences at a later date. Such a principle would have caused little difficulty in days when it was generally held that doctrinal statements and ecclesiastical principles were fixed, static, and unalterable. The nineteenth century, however, brought

<sup>3</sup> The case owes part of its fame to the characteristic utterance of Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor. "The Court (of Session) has pronounced an interlocutor in which it describes the utter impossibility of seeing anything like what was intelligible in the proceeding . . . . If they were obliged to qualify that finding, as they do, intimating that they doubt whether they understood the subject at all, under the words, 'so far as they are capable of understanding the subject,' I hope I may be permitted, without offence to you, to say that there may be doubt whether we understand the subject, not only because the Court of Session was much more likely to understand the matter than we are, but because I have had the mortification, I know not how many times over, to endeavour myself to understand what those principles were, and whether they have or have not deviated from them; and I have made the attempt to understand it till I find it, at least on my part, to be quite hopeless."

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with it the idea that theology is not static, but dynamic, and that new knowledge or wider experience might render it necessary to alter old forms of expression. At first, indeed, this thought appeared in the most modest of forms—the suggestion that an appeal might lie from the Confession of Faith to the Scriptures. Something of this sort, it is true, was stated in a famous passage in the Scots Confession of 1560; but it was lost in the more rigid period which produced the Westminster documents. Something of this lay also in the uneasiness of the eighteenth century Moderates under the yoke of the Confession; and we have already seen in another connection how Macleod Campbell spoke of a right to appeal from the Westminster Confession to the Scriptures on which the Confession was based. He was speaking in defence of a doctrinal development from which the Anti-Burghers would have recoiled with horror; but even into their minds the thought of change had stolen. “As no human composure” — so ran their statement — “however excellent or well-expressed, can be supposed to contain a full and comprehensive view of divine truth, so by this adherence (to the Westminster Confession) we are not precluded from embracing upon due deliberation any new light which may afterwards arise from the Word of God about any article of divine truth.”<sup>4</sup> Such a statement, though not stretching very far, was in tune with tendencies of wider scope which were at work in larger fields than Scotland. With such statements in themselves, of course, the civil courts had no desire to meddle. Their only interest in them was in their bearing upon civil status and the tenure of property. But as ecclesiastical property consists largely in the buildings which are used for public worship, the

<sup>4</sup> M’Kerrow, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 125.

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attitude of the law, as revealed in the Craigdallie case, was of grave import; and if the new idea should gain ground in religious bodies that the identity of a church is not impaired by orderly doctrinal development, and that it might be necessary to alter original tenets, the Craigdallie decision might yet entail much trouble on both lawyers and ecclesiastics.

In 1820, after brief and enthusiastic negotiations, the New Light Burghers and Anti-Burghers united to form the United Secession Church. This was the first episode in a maze of unions and divisions which took place during the next few years among the various sections of the Secession. The Old Lights also had their unions. As a rule, each union involved a split on the part of some minority, which could not accept the terms of union; but that minority, after a brief existence as a separate denomination, in its turn sought union with another body. The details of the process are of little importance. But New Lights and Old Lights did not coalesce. Through all the labyrinth of union and subdivision the two strains remained apart. Being Seceders, both maintained a protest against what they regarded as the errors and corruptions of the Church of Scotland. But the Old Lights held that no ecclesiastical settlement could be finally satisfactory unless it included an organic connection between Church and State, according to the historical testimony of the Scottish Church; and remembering Erskine's appeal to the "first free, faithful, and reforming Assembly of the Church of Scotland" they awaited an opportunity of re-uniting with the national church on terms which they could conscientiously accept. The New Lights, on the other hand, stood for the separation of Church and State, a policy which, if realised, would have made re-union with the Church

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of Scotland impossible; and within a few years of their union of 1820 they broke out aggressively in the Voluntary Controversy—a fierce campaign against the Church of Scotland.

The times were electric with unrest. All Europe was in a state of upheaval; and there were revolutions in France, in the Netherlands, in Poland, in Italy, in Germany. The dream of restoring Europe as it had been before the Napoleon Wars was shattered; for two new forces had entered decisively on the stage — the spirit of nationality and the spirit of liberalism. Religion, literature, politics, everything which affects the mental, social, and spiritual life of man, were all influenced; and, as often happens in such periods, the expectation of many was fixed excitedly on some immediate and unmistakable decision, a “Day of the Lord,” when the old order would be broken down and the new age begin. In Great Britain there was no Revolution of the Continental type. But the severe social distress of the period bred a mass of discontent, which made the rulers very uneasy; and many streams of agitation, springing from many different causes and many different aspirations, at last united to produce the formidable Chartist movement. There was a wild outbreak of financial speculation, leading sometimes to fantastic schemes, which at last ended in widespread loss. Above all, there was the immense political ferment, which led to rapid changes of government, and which at last bore fruit in the Reform Bill of 1832. Every national institution was shaken by the tempest. The Voluntary Controversy in Scotland was one of the many movements in which the spirit of the times found expression; and in it we note the same impetuous fervour that could be seen in parallel movements, the same extravagance of language, the same unrestrained

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bitterness, the same expectation of carrying the enemy's citadel with a rush.

Like the Oxford Movement, also a product of those times, it began with a sermon—preached in 1829 by Dr. Andrew Marshall, Secession minister at Kirkintilloch. His fears were aroused by the recent measure of Catholic Emancipation—a measure which, reinforced by the national spirit of Ireland, freed Roman Catholics from most of their civil disabilities. Scottish opinion had changed greatly since fifty years before, when Principal Robertson had found it necessary to bow before the storm; and Catholic Emancipation, though still regarded with suspicion, had now the support of many leaders of opinion of different schools of thought. The ministers of the dissenting churches were on the whole favourable, in spite of the hostility of many of their people; and a great speech by Chalmers at a public meeting in Edinburgh did much to win support for the government. “I give it as my honest conviction,” he said, “and I believe the conviction of every true-hearted Protestant who knows wherein it is that the great strength of his cause lies, that we have everything to hope from this proposed emancipation, and that we have nothing to fear.” This was very different from the spirit of the Act of 1579 which, directed against Popery, had declared that there could be “na other face of kirk” in Scotland than the national form of Protestantism. Chalmers would “own no dependence or obligation whatever on a system of intolerance.” Marshall, however, feared that the emancipation of the Roman Catholics might lead to a demand for a civil establishment of the Roman Church in Ireland; and he maintained that the only sure means of preventing that would be found in the abolition of all religious establishments.

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The Secession movement had now existed for nearly a century. It had on the whole been somewhat obscure; for it had been too self-centred to have much influence on the life of the country. Marshall's sermon marks the real entrance of the Seceders upon the arena of Scottish history. It was the first word of a furious controversy, which continued to influence the ecclesiastical politics of Scotland for the rest of the nineteenth century, and had a lasting effect upon the Scottish churches, not least upon the Church of Scotland. Otherwise, the sermon is in no wise remarkable. Marshall regarded the establishment of a national church as secularising the Church and setting aside the principle—for which he claimed support in the New Testament—that the resources of the Church should come only from the voluntary gifts of its own members. The sermon came at a moment when many were ready to listen. It drew the fire of the Church of Scotland, and a brisk war of pamphlets began. A Voluntary society was formed; a Voluntary magazine was founded; and meetings, often of the wildest description, were held all over the country. Voluntaryism brought together those old rivals, the Secession and the Relief. Their ministers joined the same societies, and appeared on the same platforms—all actuated by the same fervent expectation of speedy success.

Voluntaryism started with the declaration that "a compulsory support of religious institutions is inconsistent with the nature of religion, the spirit of the gospel, the express appointment of Jesus Christ, and the civil rights of men." Its attack was directed chiefly against the endowments of the Church of Scotland. On the larger political question of the relation between the Church and the civil magistrate Voluntaryism said little,



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and that little was negative. It affirmed that the State had no responsibilities which were not secular; and therefore it should have "nothing to do" with religion in any shape or form. If it did not deny, it left largely out of sight the old doctrine of the Presbyterians, for the sake of which the Old Lights had broken away from the rest of the Secession, that the State is an ordinance of God, and that the nation in its corporate capacity ought to render homage to Him in all appropriate ways, particularly by recognising His Church. The recent experience of the Secession had shown that, even in a church which stood apart from the Establishment, it was not possible to rule out the civil magistrate from all contact with its domestic affairs. He had no authority over the conscience; but he had authority over those visible and temporal arrangements of the church in which conscience expresses itself. The ownership of ecclesiastical funds and buildings, the rights of individuals as against the authority of the church to which they adhered, the limits, if any, within which a church may alter its tenets—such things had been debated more than once or twice before secular tribunals. The Voluntaries said little about that. Their main contention was that the individual had an inalienable right to choose his own form of religion without incurring any civil disability; and if his choice led him to some other fold than the Church of Scotland, they declared that he could not justly be required to pay, directly or indirectly, for the maintenance of a system of which he disapproved.

The temper of the Voluntaries grew more bitter as the Church of Scotland passed more and more under the control of the Evangelicals. Doctrinally the Evangelicals and the Voluntaries were akin; in ecclesiastical politics they were deeply opposed. Much

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of the prosperity of the dissenting churches was due to "abuses" in the Church of Scotland; and their economic stability might be endangered by the reform of those "abuses." During the eighteenth century they had testified much against the evils of Moderatism; but what if those evils were corrected within the Church by its own members? The challenge of the Voluntaries was taken up heartily by the Evangelicals. To their minds Voluntaryism was sheer godlessness; and they bracketed the Voluntaries with "papists and infidels." Invective replied to invective. Every step which the Evangelicals took to improve their church, every change which they advocated, was met by the Voluntaries with determined hostility. An excellent opportunity of making a demonstration of Voluntary principles was found in the Annuity Tax of Edinburgh. The stipends of the city ministers were largely derived from this tax, which was levied on all householders within the royalty, except members of the legal profession. The tax was difficult to collect; and the ministers had been by no means harsh in their demands. It became a favourite device of Voluntaries to refuse payment and to court the pouncing of their goods or even imprisonment — a device which Chalmers roundly denounced as "robbery and spoliation."

Nothing, however, offended the Voluntaries so deeply as the successful movement for Church Extension into which Chalmers was throwing the whole of his oratorical energy and administrative skill. By that movement he hoped to realise his ideal of a national church. Largely under his inspiration the Church of Scotland became thoroughly alive to the need of multiplying her churches to cope with the rapid increase of population. Up to 1834 only some forty chapels had been erected; and the equipment of the Church

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was thus not greatly different from what it had been in 1707. As far back as 1817 Chalmers had said that Glasgow alone required at that moment at least twenty new churches; and in seventeen years of rapid growth the need had become much greater. In 1834 he was appointed Convener of the General Assembly's Committee on Church Extension; and during the seven years of his convenership more than two hundred additional places of worship<sup>5</sup> were erected—an achievement which was regarded as remarkable at the time, but which still left the equipment of the Church unequal to her responsibilities. Like the Foreign Mission movement started by Dr. Inglis, the Church Extension scheme was an appeal to the liberality of the people of the Church. It cultivated in them the idea, hitherto known only in the dissenting churches, and practised there only for congregational purposes, that the work of the Church should be furthered by the personal contributions of its members. It accustomed them to the thought that their duty to the Church was wider than the parish; and a new and enthusiastic sense of unity began to make itself felt. Upon all this the Voluntaries looked with dismay; and they regarded the Church Extension movement as an attack upon themselves.

Both as a churchman and an economist Chalmers had maintained for years that it was the duty of the

<sup>5</sup> In a land full of ugly churches the Chalmers Extension churches are on the whole the ugliest—uncouth edifices of the cheapest material and the roughest workmanship, crammed with deal pews and ornamented after such a fashion that the ornaments are more ugly than the ugliness which they were meant to relieve. "It is really not easy," says the *Aberdeen Pulpit* (1840), "to get pious in one of those new, plastered, painted, fir concerns—there is no beauty of holiness in them." The buildings were in accordance with the taste of the time. Most of them were built according to a standard plan; and on hearing the number of sittings required Chalmers, who delighted in arithmetical calculations, could state at once the dimensions of the chapel and the cost of erecting it.

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secular authority to make adequate provision for what he called the "Christian education" of the people. His ideal was that Scotland should be divided into parishes of some 2000 inhabitants apiece, each with its own minister, its own church and school, its own machinery for the care of the poor. "I trust," he said, "that the Committee will not relax in its exertions, and will not relinquish them, even though it should require the perseverance of a whole generation, till we have made it a sufficiently thick-set establishment, and brought it into a state of full equipment—till churches have been so multiplied, and parochial charges so subdivided, that there will not be one poor family to be found in our land who might not, if they will, have entry and accommodation in a place of worship and religious instruction, with such a share in the personal attentions of the clergymen as to claim him for an acquaintance and a friend." To bring the organisation of the Church abreast of its responsibilities was its truest defence against the "spoliators" whose "unhallowed hands are already lifted up to mutilate and to destroy." In utterance after utterance he urged the value of the territorial system of the Church—a system by which each locality should have its own church and each church its own locality. The dissenting churches, of whose work Chalmers often spoke in terms of high praise, existed only to meet a demand—the demand made by people who had already sufficient religious principle to cause them to attach themselves to some congregation. But there still remained a very large number who were completely out of touch with all branches of the Church—"the home-heathen," as Chalmers called them. In their case no demand existed for the services of the Church. The demand had to be created. "Did we wait for the rising of a spontaneous



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demand, we might wait for ever." That demand could be created only by an "aggressive" ministry. To each minister a territory or parish should be assigned as his "home-walk," within which he would go systematically to work, confining himself wholly to it until he had taught its inhabitants to regard him and his church as belonging peculiarly to themselves. To achieve this object two things were necessary. The seat-rents of the new churches should be so low that no parishioner would be repelled by them; and the minister should have an endowed stipend which would save him from the temptation of deserting his parish for the sake of securing seat-holders who could pay their way. The request was accordingly made to Parliament to provide an endowment for each new church. The Whig Government under Lord Melbourne listened sympathetically for a time; and when it gave place at the end of 1834 to a Tory administration under Sir Robert Peel, the King's Speech foreshadowed a scheme of government assistance.

The Voluntaries took alarm. They had watched the whole Church Extension movement with much concern; but the claim for an endowment roused them to fury. That fury was in no way lessened by the suggestion, which was being conveyed to many ministers of the Relief Church, that they should seek admission with their congregations to the Church of Scotland and share in the new endowments. The suggestion was not unwelcome to many. But a notable lawsuit<sup>6</sup> determined the ownership of Relief buildings, and made it

<sup>6</sup> In the Campbeltown case (1839) the parties were the minister of a Relief church with part of his congregation and the other part of the congregation. The minister and his supporters claimed proprietary rights in the church building and intended to take it with them into the Church of Scotland; but the decision went against them on grounds, already stated in the Craigdallie case, that the ownership of such buildings was determined by the original tenets of the denomination.

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impossible to carry out any plan of piecemeal reunion with the Church of Scotland. Similar unofficial suggestions were also made to the Old Lights; and these, as it turned out, were not unfruitful. But long before that the fate of the endowment scheme was settled. After a few weeks of office, Peel's Government had to give way to Melbourne and the Whigs. In the uncertain balance of political parties, the Voluntaries were strong enough to bring the government over to their side. The proposal to grant endowments to the new churches was dropped; and a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the condition of the Church.

It was now the turn of the Church of Scotland to be dismayed. The membership of the Commission was not to the mind of the Church — especially as it included some very outspoken and aggressive Voluntaries. To some the appointment of a Commission appeared to be an invasion of the Church's spiritual autonomy. "This attempt," said John Hope, Dean of Faculty, and afterwards Lord President of the Court of Session, "is not paralleled, I think, by anything in the reigns of James or Charles I." Chalmers had misgivings;<sup>7</sup> but he was not prepared to take up an attitude of opposition to the Commission, especially as it was to enquire also into the dissenting churches. The enquiry revealed that, in spite of all that the dissenting churches had done, church accommodation in Edinburgh and Glasgow had fallen far behind the

<sup>7</sup> "A restless, locomotive, clamorous minority, by the noise they have raised, and by the help of men irreligious themselves, and therefore taking no interest, but the contrary, in the religious education of the people, have attained in the eyes of our rulers a magnitude and an importance which do not belong to them—while the great bulk of the population, quiet because satisfied, are by an overwhelming preponderance on the side of the Establishment."—Letter from Chalmers to Melbourne; Hanna, *op. cit.*, iii. p. 483.

increase of the population. Yet there were thousands of unlet sittings, both in the parish churches and in the Voluntary churches; and these were chiefly the sittings with the lowest rents.<sup>8</sup> Such facts seemed to Chalmers only to make the need of an endowment more clamant, in order that the Church might enter at once upon "aggressive" work. But in the political circumstances of the moment his plea was unavailing. Chalmers was ever afterwards deeply distrustful of all politicians, but especially of Whigs, whom he regarded as allies of irreligion.

With Evangelicalism in the ascendant, the old demand arose again for the abolition of patronage. With this demand Chalmers had no sympathy, though, as we shall see, it was strong enough to compel him to search for some means of satisfying it. To his mind the agitation against patronage was only one more sign of the tendency of a restless generation to break down all the bulwarks of society for the mere pleasure of breaking them down. Anti-patronage was part of the same stormy movement which in politics produced the Reform Bill of 1832; for it was easy to argue that those who had received the political franchise had the right also to be entrusted with the election of their parish ministers. It was also an element in the social struggle in which the new commercial and manufacturing classes were seeking to break down the monopolies of the landed aristocracy. The Voluntaries, however, were opposed to any change in the law of patronage. "There is nothing," said Dr. Thomas M'Crie, the learned leader of the Old Lights, "that the Voluntaries dread so much

<sup>8</sup> In Edinburgh there was room in the churches for only 48 per cent. of the population of the city; yet there were 11,000 unlet sittings in the parish churches, 9,000 in the dissenting. Over a third of the population of Edinburgh, and an even larger proportion in Glasgow, were living in entire neglect of religious ordinances.

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as the abolition of patronage." To improve the Church of Scotland was to strike a blow at their denominational prosperity. They had an interest in those "abuses" of the Church of Scotland against which they were professedly protesting; and any attempt to remove them was to prejudice the Voluntaries.

The controversy between the Voluntaries and the Evangelicals went on merrily for several years. It reacted upon the temper and policy of the Evangelicals; and when they found that Parliament was so far susceptible to Voluntary influences that it refused their requests, they fell back upon those theocratic ideas which have always attracted the Evangelical temperament in Scotland. Under the influence of the "new light" the Secession had laid the Covenants aside; but the Evangelicals began to hark back to the language and ideas of the seventeenth century, as these had been handed down in popular versions of history. The Voluntaries, whom they regarded as mere children of darkness, and whom they were accustomed to treat with the most disdainful exclusiveness, were now impeding the Church of Scotland in two enterprises which lay very near the Evangelical heart — Church Extension and the modification, if not the abolition, of patronage. Perhaps it might be possible for the Church to attain its ends by using its own powers. Could it not act without that Parliamentary sanction, which the Voluntaries would certainly do their best to prevent? How the Evangelicals answered such questions, and what results their answers brought about, will be seen in the next chapters. Chalmers himself, who was not wholly in sympathy with the more enthusiastic dreams of his younger followers, could nevertheless express opinions of a very sweeping kind — opinions which showed that his historical sense did not always keep

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abreast of his romanticism. "In things ecclesiastical we decide all," he said in the course of a sermon preached in 1829, when the Voluntary controversy was beginning. "Even the law of patronage, right or wrong, is in force not by the power of the state, but by the permission of the Church; and with all its fancied omnipotence has no other basis than that of our majorities to rest upon. . . . The magistrate might withdraw his permission; and she cease to be an establishment any longer—but in all the high matters of sacred and spiritual jurisdiction, she would be the same as before. With or without an establishment, she in these is the unfettered mistress of her doings. The King, by himself or by his representative, might be a looker-on; but more the King cannot, the King dare not."<sup>9</sup>

London, however, was less interested in the Church of Scotland than in the Church of England, which was then being attacked with a vigour which alarmed its leaders. To the Tractarians the new Liberalism, which took nothing for granted, and which claimed the right to examine all institutions, however venerable, seemed to be mere infidelity towards God because of its attitude towards the Church. The Duke of Wellington declared in 1838 that the question of the hour was Church or no Church; and the Melbourne administration was considering the position of the Irish Church after a fashion which boded no good to other religious establishments. His soul ablaze with anger against what he regarded as a sacrilegious conspiracy, Chalmers accepted an invitation in 1838 to deliver a series of

<sup>9</sup> Chalmers, *Sermons preached on Public Occasions*, pp. 459, 460. Chalmers was so satisfied with this passage that he incorporated it in his lectures on *Church Establishments*, delivered nine years later in London, though he omitted it in a later edition of the lectures. Hanna, *op. cit.*, iv., p. 45.

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lectures in London in defence of church establishments. Of all his oratorical triumphs perhaps none was greater than this. Day after day he lectured to a great audience, where all that was most influential in London was content to sit at his feet. The "whirlwind of enthusiasm" grew stronger as the course proceeded; and when published, the lectures were the book of the day. In those lectures Chalmers repeated what he had already said many times in much the same language during his campaign for Church Extension. He insisted that there ought to be a close connection between Church and State; and the Voluntary doctrine which denied this he held to be mere secularism. But the connection for which he contended was merely that the State ought to be the paymaster of the Church—"a legal provision," as he put it, "for the support of a Christian ministry." His mind was pre-occupied with the thought of the great multitude, mostly of the working-classes, who remained aloof from all churches; and throughout the lectures he contrasted the "impotence" of Voluntaryism, which depended for its maintenance on its power of "attracting" those who were already well disposed towards it, with the strong position held by an Established Church, where in every parish an endowment, provided or secured by the State, made it possible for the parish minister to carry on an "aggressive" ministry from house to house. In the interests of social stability, as much as of religion, the secular authority ought to support the national mission of the national church. Economists and Voluntaries were mistaken in thinking that the spiritual needs of a nation could be left to the law of supply and demand. Unlike the demand for food and clothing, the demand for the things of the spirit was felt least where it was really most necessary; and the only satisfactory method

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was the territorial system of a national establishment. At the same time, he maintained that it was for the Church, and the Church alone, to determine its own administration and to declare its own doctrine. But this matter of the autonomy of the Church he did not greatly emphasize; for the principal object of his lectures was to reply to the Voluntaries.

Within five years of his London lectures it fell to the lot of Chalmers, as we shall see, to become the figure-head of the largest secession in Scottish history. But even at the moment of division he took care to assert as strongly as he could his faith in the value of an establishment. To his mind that value was mainly practical. The air was full of utilitarian theories; and much as his romantic spirit detested utilitarianism, he was influenced by it more than he thought. He regarded the Church of Scotland in the first instance as a great Home Mission. Even in this conception, however, he fell short of greatness. He was an organiser, not an evangelist—unlike Wesley, who was both. He was a master of statistics, methods, and finance. He had eloquence, he had passion, he had enthusiasm and the power of arousing enthusiasm. But he had not the gifts of an apostle. And thus, though he saw the significance of the Industrial Revolution, and understood that the Church would have to take it into account, his dream of a national Home Mission failed both in his own time and afterwards to touch the hearts of the working classes of his countrymen.

The Voluntary Controversy disappeared from sight in the storm of the Disruption. But its effects were felt throughout the Scottish churches for the rest of the nineteenth century. For one thing, it brought together those old rivals, the Secession and the Relief. In 1847 they coalesced to form the United Presbyterian Church,

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which thereafter took a place in the religious life of Scotland, such as neither of its component parts could have taken. The United Presbyterian Church accepted the principle of Voluntaryism. In acknowledging the Westminster Confession, it carefully protected itself against approving "anything in these documents which teaches, or may be supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion" — a statement much less sweeping than the declarations made on many Voluntary platforms that the office of civil magistrate was wholly secular and had "nothing to do" with religion. As they stood on paper, the words in the United Presbyterian articles might have been accepted in any other church in Scotland. In practice, however, the United Presbyterians as a whole stood for disestablishment. They took a leading part in an agitation which went on for some forty or fifty years, and which, as long as it continued, made it impossible to hope for any healing of the religious divisions of Scotland. With disestablishment was conjoined disendowment—a legacy from the Voluntary Controversy—against which the defenders of the Establishment fought strongly, but which they regarded as somewhat less objectionable than disestablishment. The United Presbyterians laid it down in their articles that their only method of supporting their church was by the voluntary contributions of its members—a principle which did not prevent them from developing in due course a scheme by which strong congregations could come to the help of the weak, or from accumulating invested funds.

The United Presbyterian Church made no endeavour to organise itself nationally. In large areas of Scotland its very name was almost unknown. Its strength was in the industrial districts, especially in and around



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Glasgow. It drew its members largely from the prosperous classes ; and many of its congregations were exceedingly wealthy. Side by side with the Free Church—the origin of which will be described in the next chapters—it showed impressively how much could be done by means of the voluntary offerings of a willing people. It created a large and powerful church in Scotland ; and it built up magnificent missions in non-Christian lands.

But the example of the voluntary churches was followed in due course by the Church of Scotland. Chalmers' demand for a national endowment for his chapels was not the first demand of the sort which the Church of Scotland had made ; but it was the last. The split in the Church in 1843 made it politically impossible for any such demand to be repeated ; and after the Disruption the Church of Scotland followed the example of relying upon the voluntary offerings of her people. By means of these she both added a great number of new parishes to her system, and endowed them on a larger scale than Chalmers had contemplated. The United Presbyterian Church, the Free Church, and the Church of Scotland all looked solely to the contributions of their people to provide for the spiritual needs of an increasing population. The result was that whereas Chalmers almost despaired of bringing church accommodation abreast of the sheer necessities of the country, by the end of the nineteenth century it was ahead of them. Many unnecessary churches were erected—often two or three where one would have sufficed. To each new church that one denomination built the others made haste to build rivals. Denominational rivalry led to a bad distribution of agencies ; and the spirit of voluntary liberality, which had been so splendidly evoked, was often wasted in a

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tireless sectarian competition. In spite of the multiplication of churches and clergy, the Home Mission problem of Scotland at the end of the nineteenth century was as acute as it had been in the days of Chalmers.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TEN YEARS' CONFLICT.

DURING the Voluntary controversy, and partly as a consequence of it, the Church of Scotland became the scene of a domestic conflict, sometimes known as the Ten Years' Conflict, which in the end overshadowed all other matters, broke the Church in two, and embittered the social, political and religious life of Scotland for sixty years and more. By one party adherence to their cause was made the test by which all things were measured; and not to take their side was to be a traitor to the Christian religion. With both parties the conflict became a distorting medium through which they viewed, not merely the transactions of their own times, but all the history of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation. The Disruption created a tradition of hostility which continued long after the occasions, and even the causes, of the conflict had been removed; and this hostility went far to divert the attention of both disputants from the more important things which, in Scotland, as elsewhere, were revolutionising life and thought. In doctrine, in ritual, in procedure, in their general outlook on matters of faith and conduct the contending churches remained identical. They responded in much the same way and at much the same time to the influences of the period—a sign, if such were required, that the quarrel of the churches was not concerned with any of the weightier matters of the Christian religion. The controversy arose, not over any article of faith, but over a question, or rather over a

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local detail in a question, of ecclesiastical polity. It drew into its service many men of ability who might well have achieved greater things, if they had not been compelled to devote themselves to a matter which concerned very few beyond Scotland. The Disruption has been called a disaster; and a disaster it was, not so much because it broke the Church of Scotland in two, as because its animosities were allowed to outlive their natural period. In a time of great world-movements the Disruption controversy localised, almost provincialised, the Scottish churches; for they seemed to be unable to consider anything, no matter how great, without remembering their domestic quarrel. When at last the churches awoke to the fact that the Disruption controversy had ceased to interest the ordinary Scotsman, they discovered also that through undue concentration upon a local dispute they had almost wrecked the religious life of their country. In any treatise on Scottish history it is still necessary to deal with the Disruption at some length. But that necessity will not always continue; and if we are to seek for the real "contribution" of nineteenth-century Scotland to the Universal Church, we shall probably find it, not in the acts of such men as Chalmers or Macleod, Charteris or Rainy, but in Alexander Duff or David Livingstone, pioneers who hewed the path to the "regions beyond."

In 1834 the Evangelical party definitely gained the upper hand in the General Assembly. They used their power to pass two important Acts—an Act "anent Calls," popularly known as the Veto Act, and the Chapel Act. A few years later, the exigencies of party conflict made it necessary to describe the Veto Act as an anti-patronage measure. In reality, its object was to protect patronage by a judicious infusion of the popular

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element. The agitation, which brought about the Reform Bill of 1832, reacted upon the Church, and created a desire for popular election of ministers. With this desire the Evangelical leaders had little sympathy. "I should think it a very great injury to the Church of Scotland," said Dr. Patrick M'Farlan, afterwards a conspicuous figure in the Disruption movement, "if the election of ministers were put into the hands of the people." "Between the two kinds of patronage," said Chalmers, "the ostensible patronage of the present system, and that disguised patronage which operates with a force as resistless, though unseen, under the forms of a popular election, I would never once think of comparing the likelihood of a good result." He had no trust in the "patron who lurks unseen amid the recesses of a parochial community"; and he spoke with characteristic scorn of "village demagogues." But the anti-patronage spirit existed in the Church; and the demand for the abolition of patronage became so strong that the House of Commons found it necessary to appoint a commission of enquiry—the first sign since 1712 that Parliament might be induced to deal with the matter. The Voluntary attack on the Church was being pressed home with great determination; and the Voluntaries feared nothing so much as the abolition of patronage—as the Evangelicals knew very well. The Evangelical policy was accordingly devised "to stem the force of excitement and agitation," to appease the anti-patronage section of the Church, and to outflank the Voluntaries.

The first round was fought in 1833, when Chalmers was defeated by only twelve votes on a motion that the dissent, with or without reasons, of a majority of the male heads of families in a congregation "ought to be of conclusive effect in setting aside a presentee."

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The successful motion was made by Dr. George Cook, professor of Church History at St. Andrews, the learned, unimpassioned, sagacious leader of the Moderates. His motion required the presbytery<sup>1</sup> to consider not merely objections to a presentee's "life" or "doctrine," such as it was already bound to consider, but any objection of any kind stated by parishioners. Between the two motions there was very little difference. Both speakers were making concessions to the times without any great strength of personal conviction; and they differed only as to whether objections were to be with or without reasons. The battle was renewed in 1834; and on this occasion the Evangelicals won. The successful resolution became the basis of the Veto Act. In its preamble the Act stated that "it is a fundamental law of this church that no pastor shall be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people"—a statement of doubtful accuracy, from which its supporters were afterwards known as the Non-intrusionists. It provided that if a majority of male heads of families "disapproved" of a presentee, the presbytery was to proceed no further, but was to declare him rejected. The Act also defined the procedure which was to be followed; and that procedure was as cautious and deliberate as could be desired.

The Veto Act clearly introduced a new factor. The presentation, the "call," the procedure of the presbytery were of long standing and of recognised validity; but

<sup>1</sup> The procedure of the period was that, on receiving a presentation to a vacant parish, the presbytery met in the vacant church to "moderate in a call"—that is, to give the parishioners an opportunity of signing the "call" in favour of the presentee. If the presentee were not already ordained, as was the case in most instances, the next step was for the presbytery to take him on "trials" for ordination—that is, to enquire into his "life, literature, and doctrine." That formula covered the presentee's personal character, his academic training, and his soundness in Christian doctrine; and both at the "trials" and on the day of ordination an opportunity was given to parishioners to bring forward objections to "life" or "doctrine."

the negative process of disapproval or veto was new. The innovation plainly had a bearing upon other than ecclesiastical interests, particularly the civil interests of patrons and presentees. In the exercise of its judicial authority the decisions of the General Assembly often affected important civil interests; and from those decisions there was no appeal to the civil courts. But the Veto Act was not a judicial, but a legislative measure. What legislative powers, if any, did the General Assembly possess? Could it legislate in such a fashion as to affect civil interests without the possibility of an appeal to the civil courts? If it possessed legislative powers, did these include the right to legislate in this particular fashion? To such questions it was by no means easy to give a categorical answer. Chalmers, who was not a member of the General Assembly of 1834, afterwards declared that he had been of opinion that the reform should be brought about by a parliamentary rather than an ecclesiastical Act. In the political circumstances of the day, however, it would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to obtain an Act of Parliament. Political parties were in a state of very uncertain equilibrium; and as the Voluntaries dreaded nothing so much as a successful attempt to popularise the Church of Scotland, they would certainly have thrown all their political influence into the scale against the Church, as they did so successfully on the question of endowments. The General Assembly was thus under the strongest inducement to use all the powers which it possessed without going to Parliament. The Evangelicals had excellent reasons for believing that the church courts could competently pass the Veto Act. They consulted legal opinion; and it was on their side. The Law Officers of the Whig Government gave their official

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approval. The Crown declared its willingness to regulate its patronage in accordance with the Act; and the Crown was by far the greatest patron in Scotland. Lord Brougham, the Lord Chancellor of the day, described the Act in Parliament as a "wise and beneficent measure." The motion in the General Assembly was made by Lord Moncrieff, a sound lawyer and an eminent judge of the Court of Session. Nevertheless, not every one was convinced by so imposing a body of opinion. The opposition to the Act was led by Professor Duncan Mearns of Aberdeen, the clearest thinker in the General Assembly. The Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice Clerk, who both happened to be members of that General Assembly, voted against it. John Hope, the Dean of Faculty, who had been so indignant at the appointment of the Royal Commission to investigate the condition of the Church, looked on the Veto Act as bad in law and unsound in policy. The Moderate party lodged a numerously signed dissent against the Act on various grounds—amongst others, that it might cause a collision with the civil authorities. But the Act was passed and came at once into operation; and the Moderates accepted the situation without demur.

The Chapel Act arose out of the new movement for Church Extension. Its object was to further the movement by giving the new churches a definite place within the constitution of the Church. An Extension church had a minister and a congregation; but it was under the supervision of the parent parish church. It had no kirk-session; no district or area was assigned to it; and its minister had no seat in the church courts. To the Evangelical mind this seemed to limit unduly the function of the ministry. It allowed ministers to teach, but not to take their proper part in church government



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and discipline. Nor were Evangelical ecclesiastics blind to the fact that, as the new churches were largely occupied by supporters of their party, the admission of Extension ministers and elders would add to their strength in the church courts. The Moderates opposed the measure on the ground that they doubted the competency of the General Assembly to pass it; but they announced their willingness to join with the other side in approaching Parliament. Their doubts were shared by many prominent Evangelicals—by none more than by Chalmers, who regarded the measure as more likely to hinder than to help his scheme of Church Extension. To assign a district to a new church was clearly to affect the interests of all who lived in the parish out of which it was carved. To give seats in church courts to ministers and elders from the new churches was still more clearly to affect civil rights. Apart from their spiritual functions presbyteries had important secular responsibilities. They had to judge presentations to vacant parishes; they had to supervise parish schools; they were courts of first instance in such matters as churches, manses, glebes and churchyards. There were thus many sound reasons for doubting whether the General Assembly had powers to pass the Chapel Act.

Nevertheless, the Act was carried by 152 votes to 103. Those who supported it believed that they were giving an impetus to Church Extension; and the progress of that movement for the next seven years seemed to justify their opinion. There was also a hope that by means of this Act the door might be opened for the return of those who had separated from the Church. In many parishes the needs of Church Extension could be met best, not by the erection of an additional building, but by finding room within the Church for a

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dissenting congregation which was already in existence. There was, of course, no expectation of winning the Secession Church. It had declared openly for Voluntaryism; and no union of Scottish Presbyterians could ever be brought about on that basis. But if the Secession Church could not be won over, it might be disarmed; and nothing would disarm it so quickly as the creation of a large number of new charges in the Church of Scotland with a definite place in the organisation of the Church and with constitutions as popular as any Secession congregation. There was a little more hope of gaining the Relief; and until the Campbeltown case determined the ownership of Relief properties, not a few Relief ministers and congregations were willing to listen to unofficial suggestions of reunion. Under the leadership of M'Crie, the Old Light Anti-Burghers desired nothing so much as a reunion with the Church of Scotland; but their difficulty was patronage, and the Veto Act by no means met their views: It had not brought patronage to an end; it had only "muzzled the monster." In 1839 a considerable section of the Old Light Burghers returned; and a place was found for their ministers and congregations under the provisions of the Chapel Act. The result, however, was a lawsuit which upset the Act.

Within a few months of the passing of the Veto Act, a Mr. Robert Young was presented to the parish of Auchterarder and was vetoed. In accordance with the Act, the presbytery declared him rejected. After much appealing and protesting on various details in the ecclesiastical courts, patron and presentee at last brought the matter before the Court of Session. The case came on in November, 1837, and was deemed of such importance that it was heard by the whole bench

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of thirteen judges. The pursuers maintained that the presbytery had acted illegally in rejecting a presentee solely on account of a congregational veto. Under the statute of 1592 the presbytery was "bound and astricted" to make trials of the qualifications of the presentee, and, if he was found qualified, to admit him to the parish.<sup>2</sup> The Church pled in reply that the Veto Act was within its statutory powers. No attempt was made to take higher ground, such as was afterwards taken in the General Assembly and on public platforms by many representative Non-intrusionists. "I entirely disclaim and utterly reject," said Rutherford, the Solicitor-General of the day, speaking as counsel for the Church, "the doctrine of compact, or, as it has been elsewhere termed, the Alliance between Church and State. . . . When I say that the Church of Scotland is dependent on the State, I do not mean to speak of the Church of Scotland in a spiritual sense, as forming part of that Universal Church which consists of the elect in every age and climate and under all denominations—that Church to which the promises were made, and which is assured of the guidance of the Spirit. I speak of the Church of Scotland as a national establishment, possessed of privileges and immunities, endowed with property, having an orderly gradation of judicatories in sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assemblies, and invested with high judicial, and not judicial only, but legislative powers. The Church of Scotland in this last sense . . . is dependent on the State; it is the creature of the State;

<sup>2</sup>In view of what happened, it is well to observe that under the Veto Act the veto was declared at the time when signatures were invited for the "call," and before the presentee had been taken on "trials"; and rejection therefore meant that no "trials" were conducted.

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it derives its being and existence from the State."<sup>3</sup> It was argued that in the constitution of the Church, as thus described, the "call" had a real place, and that the right of a presentee could not be perfected without a "call." It lay wholly within the jurisdiction of the Church to say what constituted a valid "call." Acceptableness to the parishioners was a necessary qualification in a presentee; and the procedure under the Veto Act was in effect part of the process of the "call," by which the acceptableness of a presentee was tested. This was a purely ecclesiastical matter; and even if the ecclesiastical courts had erred, it was not competent for the civil courts to intervene. By eight votes to five the Court found that in rejecting Young the presbytery had acted "illegally and in violation of their duty" to the "hurt and prejudice" of both patron and presentee. The division was close enough to show that the pleas advanced by the Church were not so baseless as many imagined; but when the case was appealed to the House of Lords, the judgment of the Court of Session was sustained.

The decision of the Court of Session brought consternation to the Evangelicals. In the General Assembly of 1838 a militant Declaration of Spiritual Independence was carried by 183 votes to 142. Its language purposely recalled the language of Melville or of the Covenanters; and claims were advanced for the church courts which had never yet been stated in such uncompromising terms. The Declaration acknowledged that in all matters of civil right and emolument all subjects owed obedience to the civil courts; for in those matters the ecclesiastical courts claimed no authority. But "in all matters touching the doctrine, government and discipline of the Church her

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, *Auchterarder Case*, i. p. 348.

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judicatories possess an exclusive jurisdiction founded on the Word of God alone." Christ was the only head of the Church, and her jurisdiction flowed directly from Him; for, as the Westminster Confession put it, "He had appointed a government in the hands of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." It was maintained that those general principles were recognised in the statutes which determined the relations between Church and State in Scotland; and the Veto Act, dealing as it did with a purely ecclesiastical matter—the settlement of ministers in parishes—was therefore a measure which the church courts were entitled to pass. The merits of the Veto Act were no longer the primary consideration. "What the Assembly is concerned with at present," said Dr. Robert Buchanan of Glasgow, who moved the Declaration, "is not the wisdom of the Church, but the competency of the Church, in making such a law at all." "This spiritual jurisdiction"—so ran the Declaration—"they will assert, and at all hazards defend, by the help and blessing of that great God who in the days of old enabled their fathers amid manifold persecutions to maintain a testimony even to the death for Christ's kingdom and crown." Here was the language of the Covenant; and here also was its spirit—the old theocratic spirit which claims immediate sanction from Heaven not merely for fundamental principles but for the inferences and deductions drawn from them by a dominant group of ecclesiastics. Failure to accept those inferences and deductions was a mark of spiritual inferiority. Opposition to them was impious, and must be put down. "They will firmly enforce obedience upon all office-bearers and members of the church."

Between Moderates and Evangelicals there was not the smallest difference on the general principle that the

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Church possessed in her own right a spiritual jurisdiction which flowed from no secular source, but was conferred on her by the great Head of the Church. Not only in the debate of 1838, but throughout all the controversy which followed, the Moderates made it clear that on this fundamental doctrine there was no difference among Scottish ecclesiastics. "I entirely agree," said Dr. Cook, "that our Church, the Church of Christ, is not the creature of the State." But the Church of Scotland was working under a concordat with the State—the only possible method of making provision for the practical application of the spiritual freedom which she possessed. The question was, did this new Veto Act come within the terms of the concordat? That was plainly a question of law; and when the law had been stated by the only competent authority, the decision must be accepted and obeyed, at least until such time as the concordat might be re-adjusted by mutual agreement between the contracting parties.

The Evangelicals held, however, not only that the Church of Scotland possessed in her own right an exclusive jurisdiction in things spiritual, but also that it was for the Church to determine on her own initiative what things were to be regarded as spiritual. They accused the Moderates of Erastianism, of subjecting the Church to Cæsar; and the Moderates retorted with a charge of Hildebrandism, of Papal pretensions under a mask of Presbyterianism. Neither charge was ever admitted, and neither charge was ever withdrawn—a sign, perhaps, that both charges approximated to the truth. "The only true rule in conflicting jurisdictions," said Dunlop, the most prominent lawyer who adhered to the Non-intrusion cause, ". . . was that in such cases each court judged for itself in its own matters, and did not take the determination of any other

tribunal." Such a rule entailed the risk of losing material possessions; and these were admittedly within the sole jurisdiction of the civil magistrate. But what of that? Let the civil magistrate award those possessions as he thinks just. Let him, for example, award the benefice of Auchterarder to the patron, to the presentee, or to whomsoever he finds entitled to it; for that is his function. But let him not invade the rightful jurisdiction of the Church when she defines or alters the procedure by which a man becomes a minister of the Gospel in a Scottish parish.

The solution seemed simple, though uncomfortable; but in reality it was fallacious. It only put the difficulty a little way back. The material possessions of the Church — her benefices, for example — were unrecognisable in law apart from the spiritual uses with which they were associated; and other things were involved besides benefices. The Veto Act had been declared by the Court of Session to affect injuriously civil rights and interests; and the same standards of the Church, which declared her spiritual autonomy, also forbade the Church to encroach upon the civil jurisdiction. It has always been a difficulty in government, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to adjudicate in the concrete applications of abstract ideas. Reduced to practice, the spiritual autonomy of the Church implies, among other things, the right to move without incurring penalties; and the correlative of the doctrine of spiritual autonomy is therefore a working arrangement, accepted both by the Church and the civil magistrate, under which the rights of the Church can be freely exercised. Those rights it has never been altogether easy for a State to acknowledge; for an institution, which is based upon authority and obedience, has difficulty in "placing" an institution.

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which is founded upon faith and conscience. But in Scotland, where the collision between Church and State had been of the sharpest, the long struggle had in the end brought about a practical settlement which was intended, and which seemed at the time, to secure fully the rights of the Church. It had worked tolerably well for nearly a hundred and fifty years. But since 1690 great changes had passed over both Church and State; and by 1838 both were conscious that they had to deal with a new situation.

That new situation was created by the Reform Bill of 1832, not only because it stimulated the desire for popular rights in the Church, but because it was a revolution in the State. It marked the acceptance of the democratic ideas which had already carried the day in America and France. It altered the foundations of government; for it gave the final authority, not to the Crown, as in the seventeenth century, nor to an exclusive oligarchy of powerful landed families, as in the eighteenth, but to the will of the people. True, the new franchise was very limited as compared with the extensions which it received during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; but a breach had been made with the past, and power was transferred from the old landed aristocracy to the commercial and professional classes, now much increased in wealth and importance. Further, recent legislation, such as Catholic Emancipation or the repeal of the English Test and Corporation Acts, indicated that the State no longer identified itself with religious interests of any sort, as it had done so emphatically in the time of the Stuarts. The decisive step had been taken after a period of extraordinary agitation; and in Scotland, where the area of conflict was narrower than in England, and where the abuses and corruptions of the political system were much



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worse, the struggle had been maintained with a fervour, almost religious in its intensity, such as had not been seen since the days of the Covenants. In the background, but coming steadily into the light, was the ominous figure of Chartism. It was the product of the social discontents of the time, and waned as they were appeased. But in its day it caused much vague but real fear, even among some of the keenest advocates of Reform; for many looked upon it as likely to undermine the moral foundations of society. The signs of the times portended a new State, purely secular in character and outlook, which would ignore, and perhaps deny, the claims of religion.

During the eighteenth century, as has been noted, the old conception of a national church had for all practical purposes disappeared in Scotland. The establishment of the Church was taken for granted; and the course of events had not compelled men to think out the problem of Church and State. Even Chalmers, as we have seen, with all his passionate advocacy of a national establishment of religion, was content with the utilitarian plea that an endowed church, properly equipped and sufficient, was the best safeguard against political revolution. Such thinking as there had been was done chiefly in the small bodies of Old Lights. Principal Hill's account of the constitution of the Church was mainly descriptive and expository. The Voluntaries were content with negatives, to which Dr. John Inglis made weighty reply in his *Vindication of Religious Establishments*. But the thinker of most influence was Dr. Thomas M'Crie of the Old Light Anti-Burghers. No books were more popular, especially among Evangelicals, than his biographies of Knox and Melville; and the men who took the lead in the Disruption movement were deeply

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influenced by him. In a democratic State, such as the Reform Bill created, secular and perhaps anti-religious in character, what was the position of the Church of Scotland? Was she a creature of the State, at the mercy of the will of the people, an institution which the State could make or unmake at its pleasure? Or did the Church stand for something over which the democratic State could claim no authority? The Auchterarder decision was disconcerting; but the real alarm was caused by such an utterance as that of the Lord President of the Court of Session—based, it must be remembered, upon the words of the counsel for the Church, which have already been quoted—in which he distinguished between the Church as a spiritual institution and the Church as a national establishment. “The Parliament,” he said with all the emphasis at his command, “is the temporal head of the Church, from whose acts, and from whose acts alone, it exists as the national church and from which alone it derives all its powers.” His words, torn from their context, were shockingly misconstrued by the Evangelicals. But they sounded too like an echo of old opinions which they feared; and to the Evangelical mind, ever responsive to “high-church” ideas, they suggested that all that the Church of Scotland had secured in the way of self-government was in danger.

With the debate of 1838 on the Spiritual Independence of the Church the opposing parties came fairly into line against one another. Subsequent incidents sharpened the issues and embittered the conflict; but no material change took place in the attitude or the composition of the parties. Both believed, let it be repeated, in the spiritual autonomy of the Church; they differed in their opinion as to whether it had or had not been infringed at the moment.

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Behind them lay a century of rivalry and mutual distrust. The Evangelicals, being now dominant, behaved as all dominant parties have done; and the Moderates in opposing them believed that they were defending themselves and their fellow-churchmen from the tyrannical spirit which has always accompanied theocratic ambitions. But no single formula will explain the Disruption. Wherever there was a division of opinion or sympathy in Scotland, the opponents aligned themselves with one side or the other in the ecclesiastical struggle. That struggle was as much social and political as ecclesiastical or religious. The Church was the one considerable national institution in Scotland; and round it gathered a popular enthusiasm of such a kind that the ecclesiastical controversy became a nucleus for most of the discontents of the period—social, political, theological, cultural. Bitter as all controversies have been in Scotland, none has been so disastrously bitter as this. It invaded every parish, every home. Banks, shops, clubs, schools, industries, landed estates—everything was affected by it. Even the playgrounds of the children could feel its influence. Not a Parliamentary election could be held, not a local government authority could function, without taking it into account. No appointment could be made, important or unimportant, without considering the ecclesiastical attachment of the candidates. So many opposites had to be reconciled before the feud could be healed that, long after its ground had been forgotten, the antagonism of the Churches was the most difficult factor in the social life of Scotland.

To the clerical mind Spiritual Independence seemed of greater importance than anything else. But to the ordinary layman patronage was probably of more urgency; and in the end the Non-intrusionists allied

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themselves with the anti-patronage cause. Chalmers thoroughly disliked the movement; but his younger henchmen showed no such antipathy, and could even discover Scriptural authority against patronage. The roots of anti-patronage were deep in the popular traditions of the Church; and the Reform Bill awakened it once more. As patronage was largely in the hands of landowners, anti-patronage had the support of the commercial and professional classes, who looked on the landed class with hostility, and were ready to aid anything which diminished the prestige of their rivals. The Non-intrusionists accordingly could count on much support in the larger towns. Their leaders were for the most part ministers of large city congregations, composed of the prosperous middle classes. Over them Chalmers, being one of themselves, had established a remarkable personal ascendancy, especially among the wealthy business men of Glasgow; and his Church Extension scheme had been made possible mainly by their subscriptions.

But the Non-intrusionists found much support also in the Highlands, especially in the Northern Highlands, in a class far removed socially and intellectually from the burgesses of the cities. This was due partly to religious influences, partly to agrarian troubles. The old clan loyalty had disappeared. The land policy of the Highland lairds estranged them from the peasantry, many of whom complained, not without much truth, that they were dispossessed of the heritage of their fathers to make room for sheep. Large sheep farms had been created, often at considerable expense on the part of the laird; and in some cases the making of those farms involved the ruthless eviction of crofting communities, who had been on the land for centuries. The laird, the factor, the sheep-farmer—these were the “natural

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enemies " of the crofter and the fisherman ; and because the Moderate minister was supposed—sometimes falsely enough—to be on friendly terms with those " enemies," he was loaded with calumny. Almost to a man the people of the Northern Highlands took the side of the Evangelicals. Agrarian interests were, however, mingled with strong religious influences. Evangelicalism early secured a foothold in Ross-shire, and spread thence over Sutherland, Caithness and the Hebrides. There it held sway in its sternest form. The usages of the Covenanting Lowlands gained possession of a people whose traditions had at one time been very different ; and nowhere in Scotland did the Puritan spirit take a stronger grip of the popular consciousness. The region was the home of The Men—religious leaders sprung from the peasantry, austere, rigid and often fanatical, who asserted their power over ministers and people alike. No one dared to dispute their authority. Far back in the history of the Church men had noted the fear with which the Northern Highlander approached the Sacrament of Holy Communion ; and under The Men that fear became a terror. No one might approach the Holy Table without their sanction ; and few could pass the tests which they demanded. Under the spiritual tyranny of The Men all poetry and music, all the arts and fancies of the Highland mind were banished as unclean things ; and in their place came that combination of Calvinist theology and Puritan manners which, just because it is alien to the real spirit of the Celt, changed the religion of the Northern Highlands into a grim and uncouth thing. It bound the Highlands firmly to the Non-intrusionist cause—so firmly indeed that, when at a later date the ecclesiastical policy of the Free Church began to break away from Disruption traditions, its chief embarrass-

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ment was the loyalty of the Northern Highlands to the lessons taught in Disruption times.

The far North learned its Evangelicalism from the Lowlands; and the Non-intrusionists were drawn on the whole from the most rigid and Puritanical school of Evangelicalism. The difference between Moderate and Evangelical was in temper rather than in creed or observance; and the Evangelicals prided themselves on being more religious than their opponents. A characteristic Evangelical of the period was Robert M'Cheyne, minister of St. Peter's, Dundee, who laboured successfully and with consuming zeal in the work of an evangelist, basing his fiery appeals on the strictest orthodoxy and the most literal interpretation of the Bible. His writings are now unknown; but for a generation and more they were classics among the Evangelicals, and were sold in thousands. The influence of M'Cheyne was far wider than his own parish or city; and when the Non-intrusionists raised the cry that "the crown-rights of the Redeemer" were in danger, they addressed the deeper emotions of that large section of the Church of which M'Cheyne was a representative. The sacrifices and the venturesomeness of the Disruption would have been impossible save in an atmosphere such as he created. Intensity of spirit is not always compatible with sympathy; and the piety of the Evangelicals was harsh and narrow in proportion to its fervour. It produced a type of mind which was incapable of recognising any merit of any kind in those who did not walk according to its canons; and in its enthusiasm for its own cause it could believe that all the piety and all the learning and all the practical ability of the Church were on its side and on no other. No small part of the success, and no small part of the bitterness, of the Disruption were due to the spiritual pride and exclusiveness of Evangelicals.

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But in one considerable region of Scotland the Evangelicals were far from dominant; and to their mind it was a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. The north-east—Aberdeenshire and the neighbouring counties—was a stronghold of the Moderate party, not because Moderatism, as known in the south, had ever prevailed largely, but because it had strong religious traditions of its own. “The Dead Sea of Moderatism”—so certain of the Evangelicals described it; and they could say, and apparently believe, that the Gospel had not been heard there by living ears until the Non-intrusionists sent their delegates to Strathbogie. Standing apart geographically from the rest of Scotland, the north-east had a churchmanship of its own, and was always slow to welcome the enthusiasms of the south. In the day of the Covenants it resisted them. It clung tenaciously to Episcopacy, and long remained the chief centre of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. After the Revolution it had perforce to accept Presbytery like the rest of the country; but it did so with unconcealed reluctance, and the infiltration of Presbytery never wholly removed the old Episcopalian and Jacobite traditions. Its ministers sprang for the most part from its own soil and were trained in its own university. For a time the Disruption took hold of the city of Aberdeen, as of other considerable towns in Scotland; but in the landward parishes of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire it was weaker than in any other part of Scotland.

In March, 1839, the House of Lords gave judgment in the Auchterarder case against the Church. The highest legal authority thus pronounced that in the Veto Act the Church had injuriously affected civil interests. But before the decision was given, other cases had arisen; and the situation was rendered more difficult

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by the determination of the Non-intrusion leaders to continue in their policy precisely as if no doubt had been cast on the legality of the Veto. Before passing the Veto Act they had sought legal advice; and they took action only because the advice was favourable. But now that which had formerly been a suitable subject for counsel's opinion was made a matter of conscience. Incidents happened which increased the general excitement. Thus, in 1835 in the parish of Lethendy in the presbytery of Dunkeld the Crown presented a minister as assistant and successor to an aged incumbent. The presentee was vetoed — not unjustly, as his subsequent career proved; and after exhausting the ecclesiastical procedure, he followed the example set at Auchterarder and carried the matter to the Court of Session. Before a decision could be reached, the aged incumbent died; and the Crown issued another presentation in favour of another candidate, who proved acceptable to the parishioners. The original presentee accordingly obtained an interdict forbidding the presbytery to take any further proceedings in the vacancy until his case had been decided. The Commission of Assembly in August, 1838, ordered the presbytery to disregard the interdict, and to proceed with the settlement of the second presentee, giving them a very broad hint that, if they acted otherwise, they would be deposed. Following up the policy of "firmly enforcing obedience," the Commission further instructed the presbytery to deal judicially with the minister who had sought the protection of the law, not for any moral obliquity, but simply because he had exercised the rights of a citizen and had taken his case to law. The presbytery did as they were instructed, thus breaking the interdict of the Court of Session; and for this breach of interdict they were summoned to the bar of the Court and



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severely reprimanded—an incident which in the growing excitement of the times was described by enthusiasts as if the days of the Covenanters had returned.

But interest in the proceedings at Lethendy soon waned before a third case—Marnoch, in the presbytery of Strathbogie—which became the battlefield of the Disruption. In this case the Non-intrusionists, still acting on the principle of “firmly enforcing obedience,” found that they had to deal, not with an individual, but with a presbytery. The presbytery of Auchterarder was on the whole in sympathy with the Evangelical policy; the presbytery of Dunkeld was willing to fall in with it; but the presbytery of Strathbogie was opposed. While the Strathbogie case—or rather the series of Strathbogie cases—was under consideration, the Non-intrusionists were engaged in negotiations with the Government; and the case and the negotiations reacted upon one another. Difficulties increased and feelings became warm—so warm that, in spite of the brave endeavour of some to bridge the chasm, the combatants became alienated beyond all hope of reconciliation; and the Church broke in two.

In September, 1837, the patrons of Marnoch presented Mr. John Edwards, who was at the time assistant in the parish, a man of undoubted worth and ability. He was vetoed almost unanimously;<sup>4</sup> but as the Auchterarder case was then *sub judice*, the presbytery referred the matter to the Synod and the

<sup>4</sup> The veto at Marnoch was the result of an organised canvas. This in its turn was the fruit of a bitter personal quarrel which had arisen some time before between Mrs. Edwards and the wife of another minister, and which had involved most of the manse of the presbytery. The parishioners bound themselves by an oath never to enter a church of which Edwards was minister; but his character and ability overcame their hostility, and though they could not enter the parish church again without breaking their oaths, they attended in large numbers when he preached in a schoolroom. Before he died in 1849, he had built up a large congregation at Marnoch.

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General Assembly. The General Assembly of 1838, which had just passed its Declaration of Spiritual Independence, ordered the presbytery to reject Edwards in terms of the Veto Act; and the patrons issued a new presentation. Edwards forthwith carried his interests to the Court of Session, obtained an interdict against the new presentation such as had been granted in the case of Lethendy, and brought a case on the same pleas as Auchterarder. The presbytery of Strathbogie found by a majority that "the Court of Session having authority in matters relating to the induction of ministers, and having interdicted all proceedings on the part of the presbytery, and it being the duty of the presbytery to submit to that authority regularly interposed, the presbytery do delay all procedure until the matter is legally determined." This finding was justified by the fact that at the moment the Auchterarder case had been appealed to the House of Lords. The words of the minute show that the majority of the presbytery were actuated by something more than mere expediency. They were falling back upon a principle which has always been cherished by a large section of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and which was securely entrenched in the documents and testimonies of the Church; and they were not willing to accept the Non-intrusionist version of the relation between the Church and the Law. For coming to such a finding the presbytery was censured by the General Assembly of 1839. But just before that General Assembly the House of Lords gave its decision; and that decision determined the judgment of the Court of Session in Edwards' case. Shortly after the General Assembly had risen, the Court found that the presbytery of Strathbogie was bound to take Edwards on "trials" for ordination and to admit him, if qualified, to the parish of Marnoch.

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The majority of the presbytery, seven in number, were in much perplexity. They regarded the Non-intrusionist policy as wholly wrong and oppressive; and after some skirmishing on details of procedure with the Evangelical minority in the presbytery, they resolved to take Edwards on "trials." Before the resolution could take effect, the Commission of Assembly met; and to prevent the Strathbogie ministers from taking action, the Commission, at the bidding of the Non-intrusionist leaders, suspended the seven from all ministerial functions. The Commission had no disciplinary powers such as it had assumed, and therefore could not rightly impose any penalty or censure. Many held further that, even if the Commission had disciplinary powers, it was not entitled to exercise them merely in the interests of an ecclesiastical faction; and some, who thought that the action of the seven had been unwise and even "unbecoming," were shocked at the temper of the dominant party. The sentence, moreover, was needlessly severe. It meant that the seven were to be inhibited, not merely from taking part in the proceedings of the church courts, but from preaching in their own pulpits and from all other duties of the pastoral office among their own parishioners. It was one more sign of the intolerant spirit which was waxing so strong among the Evangelicals. The sentence of suspension was moved in a characteristic speech by Dr. Robert Candlish, minister of St. George's, Edinburgh, who had already made his mark in the General Assembly, and almost in one stride had become the leader of the Non-intrusionists. Of all his party he was the ablest and most determined; and from his position in Edinburgh he was able to pull many strings and to direct many intrigues. A fiery, energetic man, unsparing and unscrupulous, a tireless worker, a formidable debater, and a born organiser, he became,

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if not the figure-head, the leader of the Disruption. It was due to him more than to any other individual that the Non-intrusion controversy ended in a split in the Church. His intervention usually tended to make differences more acute; and so it proved in the case of Strathbogie.

The duty of supplying the pulpits of the seven suspended ministers lay with the minority of the presbytery, five in number; and to assist them delegates were appointed—among them some of the more conspicuous members of the Evangelical party. But the seven, holding that they had been unlawfully censured, made up their minds to fight. Claiming the protection of the civil law, they obtained an interdict to save their churches from the invasion of Evangelical delegates. They were even successful in obtaining a second interdict which forbade the delegates to officiate as ministers of the Church of Scotland anywhere within the seven parishes; but this interdict was considered by many, even of the Moderates, to be excessive, and was openly flouted. “If the Church command,” said Chalmers, “and the Court countermand, a spiritual service from any of our office-bearers, then it is the duty of all the ministers and all the members of the Church of Scotland to do precisely as they should have done though no interdict had come across their path.” Throughout Strathbogie, throughout Scotland, the excitement was very great. The seven were regarded by many as the victims of ecclesiastical tyranny. On the other side the Non-intrusionists, using abundantly the language of the Covenants, declared with passion that they alone were standing for the “Headship of Christ” against malignant enemies who were conspiring to undermine it. But the seven continued in their ministry; nor were their ministrations by any means rejected by their parishioners.

## CHAPTER XI.

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MEANWHILE the Non-intrusionists were deeply engaged in political negotiations. The final decision in the Auchterarder case was given a few days before the General Assembly of 1839 and brought on a memorable debate. The Moderates, as has been said, accepted the Veto Act, but had not been convinced either then or later that the law of the Church required alteration; and Dr. Cook proposed simply to give up the Act, now that it had been declared illegal, and to revert to the old order. Chalmers was quite willing to drop the Veto; for he saw that, until it was out of the way, it would be impossible to get any redress from Parliament. But he had been alarmed by certain *obiter dicta* of the Lords which hinted, not merely that the Veto was illegal, but that in judging of the fitness of a presentee no presbytery was entitled to take into account anything beyond the old formula, "life, literature and doctrine." If that were so, then the "call" meant nothing. He declared for maintaining at all costs the principle of non-intrusion notwithstanding the adverse decision of the House of Lords, and for proceeding forthwith to negotiate with Government for an alteration in the law.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In their discussions on Church and State, the Evangelicals looked on the Law as the "enemy" which was invading the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, and regarded the Legislature as the umpire to determine the frontier between the contending jurisdictions. The Moderates on the other hand thought of the Law as the umpire, and the Legislature, which had power to alter the Law, as the other party to the contract or concordat, with whom any alteration in the terms must be arranged.

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A third motion came from Dr. Muir of St. Stephen's, Edinburgh, a man of pronounced Evangelical sympathies, who did not trust the ecclesiastical policy of the Evangelical party. He believed, what the older Moderates did not believe, that it was necessary to give the people of the Church a much larger part in the election of their ministers; but he utterly disapproved of the Non-intrusionist policy of ignoring the law. He brought forward his motion in the spirit of a reconciler, in the hope of finding some ground on which the two parties might meet; but it suffered the usual fate of mediators. Its real significance became clear at a later stage. In spite of the decision of the House of Lords, the Non-intrusionists made up their minds to continue the Veto Act as though its legality had never been questioned. Chalmers' motion was carried by 204 to 155. A Non-intrusion Committee was appointed; and a resolution instructed presbyteries to refer all disputed settlements to the General Assembly.

This resolution did not smooth the path of political negotiation. Conservative leaders like Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham, who at an earlier date had spoken of the Church of Scotland with more understanding than is usual with English politicians, were repelled by an ecclesiastical policy which seemed to begin with defiance to the law; and Lord Melbourne, the Whig Premier, was of the same mind. Whigs and Conservatives, however, were too evenly balanced to come to close quarters with anything so difficult as the claims of the Church of Scotland; and a by-election in Perthshire, at which the Non-intrusionist candidate was defeated, indicated that no great party advantage was to be gained out of Non-intrusion. Not only was the Church sharply divided, so that a decision in favour of one party would send the other into the arms of political

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opponents; but every endeavour to popularise the Church was watched with sleepless hostility by the Voluntaries, whose political weight was considerable.

At last, after much correspondence with Chalmers and the Non-intrusion Committee, the Earl of Aberdeen, who was later to become a Premier, and who knew something of the workings of the Veto Act from experience, introduced a bill to make it possible for a presbytery to take into account the declared opposition of a congregation. The bill required, however, that a congregation must state reasons for their opposition. Those reasons might perhaps be trivial—even to the extent, as he put it in one of his letters, of objecting to a presentee because he had red hair; but trivial or weighty they must be stated. This was not in line with the Veto Act, which aimed at giving effect to dissent without reasons; and with characteristic eloquence Chalmers declared that he found something almost divine in the attitude of a “cottage patriarch,” who could feel instinctively his disapproval of a presentee, but could not explain it. Lord Aberdeen and the Non-intrusionists, it would appear, had misunderstood one another. Charges of bad faith were made on both sides; and in the General Assembly of 1840 the bill was attacked so bitterly by the Non-intrusionists that it was useless to persevere with it in Parliament. The statesman, who had eagerly desired to help the Church—his own church, to which he was deeply attached—found himself accused of conspiring to “hurl the Redeemer from His throne!”

In the spring of 1841 the Duke of Argyll took up the burden which Lord Aberdeen had laid down, and introduced a bill which for all practical purposes embodied the Veto Act. It was warmly approved by the Non-intrusionists. But before the bill could be read

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a second time, Parliament was dissolved; and as the result of the general election Melbourne and the Whigs were defeated, and Sir Robert Peel succeeded to power, with Lord Aberdeen and Sir James Graham in his cabinet. Argyll's bill disappeared. The parliamentary atmosphere, never very favourable to Non-intrusionist demands, changed for reasons other than the change of political parties. For one thing, the anti-patronage cause was gaining ground. In the General Assembly of 1841 an anti-patronage resolution was defeated by no more than three votes. Further, a revolt was setting in among certain of the Evangelicals, especially those who were not in city charges, against Candlish and his *camarilla*, whom they regarded as making intentionally for schism rather than for peace. But the chief impediment to Parliamentary intervention was the treatment accorded to the seven ministers of Strathbogie.

They had refused, as we have seen, to bow to the sentence of suspension. A sentence, passed after such a travesty of procedure, was null. They declared that they had done no wrong; on the contrary, they had acted rightly in accordance with their duty as ministers of the Church. Not only did they continue in their pastoral office. They continued also to act as the presbytery of Strathbogie; and as such they took Edwards on "trials" and found him qualified. But they delayed long over taking the decisive step; and Edwards at last had recourse once more to the Court of Session to demand that he should be admitted to the charge or receive substantial damages. The Court, saying nothing about damages, declared that the presbytery was bound to admit him. The seven were in a difficult situation. If they admitted Edwards—and they fully believed that on every ground he ought to



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be admitted—they would probably be deposed by the General Assembly; if they refused, they would be mulcted in damages. On 21st January, 1841, they met as a presbytery at Marnoch, ordained Edwards to the ministry and admitted him to the charge. In spite of heavy snow a great crowd assembled. On behalf of parishioners an agent protested formally against the proceedings; and they left the building in a body to form a new congregation. The split in the Church had begun. There had been two presbyteries in Strathbogie for some months; and now there were two ministers and two congregations in the parish of Marnoch.

At the ensuing General Assembly in May the seven ministers were brought to the bar. The offences laid to their charge were numerous. They had disregarded a sentence of suspension; they had taken Edwards on “trials”; they had invoked the protection of the courts of law; they had ordained Edwards to the ministry and admitted him to the charge of Marnoch. Their chief offence, it would seem, was that they had resorted to the courts of law in defence of their interests, “by which application you did deny the truth of God’s Holy Word and disown the Lord Jesus in so far as regards His authority as only King and Head of His church.” The trial was no real trial. For months the Non-intrusionists had denounced the men at the bar in inflammatory speeches; and they came to the General Assembly not to administer justice but to strike a blow at opponents. The seven held firmly to their ground. They had not broken the law of the Church. Obedience to ecclesiastical superiors was a duty, but only in so far as those superiors acted in accordance with the law of the Church. The seven admitted that they had done what they were accused of doing; but they had done no wrong, but rather right, and had acted in obedience

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to conscience. It was the same plea as had been put forward by Ebenezer Erskine and Gillespie; and it met with precisely the same reply from the dominant party. The plea of conscience was brushed aside as mere contumacy; and the seven were deposed. As in similar cases the sentence was disregarded. Next day the Moderates, headed by Dr. Cook, lodged a protest that the seven had acted in accordance with the duty imposed by the standards of the Church upon all her members. They declared that they would still regard the seven as ministers of the Church. A day later the seven obtained an interdict from the Court of Session suspending the sentence of the General Assembly on the ground that it was one of those "abuses in the government and discipline of the Church which the civil magistrate was to 'take order' should be remedied or removed." The interdict was intended as a prelude to a lawsuit. It was vehemently denounced by Candlish as an invasion of the spiritual liberties of the Church. But it was effective. The seven remained at their posts without further interruption; and they continued to act as the presbytery of Strathbogie.

The deposition of the seven made a difficult situation far more difficult. They had been subjected to the severest ecclesiastical censure for obedience to the law; and both Whigs and Conservatives were chary of committing themselves to an ecclesiastical party which could act as the Non-intrusionists had done. The treatment meted out to the Strathbogie ministers suggested to many, not merely of the Moderate party, that the Non-intrusionist assertion of an independent spiritual jurisdiction contained within it a menace to civil and religious liberty. Lord Melbourne, the Whig leader, thought the Church of Scotland "as bad as the Church of Rome." Conservative leaders like Sir Robert Peel

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and Sir James Graham, with whom by reason of their official positions the Non-intrusion Committee had to deal more than with any others, spoke with real understanding of the Church of Scotland and showed a desire to help it in its difficulties; but they declined to ally themselves with the Non-intrusionists. The Church had asked for the verdict of the law in appealing the Auchterarder case to the House of Lords; and in the eyes of Peel and Graham it was an outrageous thing that, when the verdict had gone against the Church, the dominant faction should not only refuse to acknowledge the decision of the Courts, but should use its majority to punish opponents for doing what that decision bound them to do. The politicians were inclined to insist that, before anything could be done to meet the demands of the Church, the Strathbogie ministers must be re-instated. It was, however, becoming increasingly difficult to negotiate at all. The minority in the General Assembly was no longer willing to acquiesce in the proceedings of the majority. The Moderates, who had hitherto taken no concerted action outside the church courts, now approached the Government on their own behalf. The Non-intrusionists were divided among themselves; and a Middle party, composed mainly of Evangelicals who were dissatisfied with the leadership of Candlish and his henchmen, was putting itself in communication with the Government.

Sir George Sinclair of Ulbster, son of the editor of the *Statistical Account*, and an elder under Candlish in St. George's, Edinburgh, came forward in an attempt to mediate. He was well-known in Parliament and at Court; and he had a talent for forming friendships with men of the most diverse opinions. He brought about a conference between Candlish and John Hope, Dean of Faculty, who had been acting as counsel for the

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presentee of Auchterarder and for the Strathbogie ministers, and whom many supposed with some reason to be the real leader of the extreme section of the Moderate Party. From these Sinclair proceeded to Lord Aberdeen, and with much difficulty persuaded him to admit into his Bill a new clause. A presbytery was to be enabled, but not compelled, to reject a presentee on account of objections which, though not conclusive to the minds of the presbytery, were held so widely throughout the parish as to "preclude the prospect of the presentee's usefulness." The clause certainly did not concede all the requirements of the Veto Act; but it gave a presbytery a right to reject on account of objections strongly held within a congregation—a right which had not previously existed. The clause accordingly gave a good prospect of freeing the Church from such cases as Auchterarder, Lethendy, or Marnoch—cases which were clearly going to have many successors. The Non-intrusionists were not wholly satisfied; but on being pressed by Sir James Graham for a definite answer, they assented on condition that it should be passed through Parliament before the end of the current session. They declared that they could conscientiously operate the proposed measure and described it as a "great boon." This was in October, 1841. By December there was a change of mind, and Sinclair's clause was no longer acceptable. It remained acceptable, however, to some who were prepared to go far for the sake of peace and unity. Sinclair's clause was thrown aside; but it had caused a distinct cleavage in the Non-intrusion party.

The change was due in part to difficulties over the Strathbogie ministers. The Premier considered that they had been treated very badly; and he made it clear that their re-instatement must form part of any settle-

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ment. In consultation with Hope, Sinclair drafted a letter for them to sign, and assured them that it would lead to their restoration. The seven, however, were not prepared to save the face of the Non-intrusion leaders. They declared that they had done nothing worthy of rebuke, much less of deposition; and they flatly refused to sign the letter. Further, a case arose at Culsalmond<sup>2</sup> in Aberdeenshire, not dissimilar in some respects to Marnoch. It also led to litigation in the civil courts; and once again, and for the same reason as formerly, the Non-intrusion cause suffered defeat. Moreover, Sinclair's clause involved the rehabilitation of Lord Aberdeen's Bill, which the Non-intrusionists had always disliked. But a speech by the Lord Advocate at Rothesay seemed to suggest that the Duke of Argyll's Bill might be resuscitated; and the prospect of that made them less willing to accept Sinclair's clause. Argyll's Bill had disappeared automatically on the dissolution of Parliament; but in April, 1842, it appeared again as a Bill introduced in the House of Commons by Campbell of Monzie, member for Argyll. The Government opposed it, because they believed that they were at last in a position to promise a Bill of their own. They had good reason, they said, for hoping to reach a satisfactory settlement. The "good reason" was the new Middle party, which was at last making itself audible.

<sup>2</sup> The presbytery of Garioch settled a minister in Culsalmond, having first resolved that, as the Veto Act had been declared illegal, no attention need be paid to a veto recorded by a small majority of those entitled to vote. The matter was brought before the Commission of Assembly in November, 1841; and the Commission suspended the newly settled minister, pending the full trial of the case by the General Assembly of 1842. There was doubt as to whether the Commission had any such powers as it assumed; and the minister brought, and won, an action of interdict in the Court of Session. Against this an appeal was taken to the House of Lords; but it was never followed up. It disappeared among the storms of 1842.

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In April, 1842, Dr. Matthew Leishman, minister of Govan, came forward in the Synod of Glasgow as the spokesman of a party which was prepared to support Sinclair's clause. The Non-intrusion policy, he saw, could end only in the division of the Church; and Leishman was not prepared for so extreme a step. A schism in the Church would remedy no evils, but rather perpetuate them; and it was alarming to discover that the Non-intrusionist leaders, so far from shrinking from division, seemed actually to desire it. Like many of his supporters, Leishman had hitherto voted steadily with the Non-intrusionists. Others, like Norman Macleod, then the young minister of Loudoun, had taken no great interest in the controversy. Macleod, like many others, became alarmed at the sacerdotal, persecuting spirit which he saw in the Non-intrusionist leaders; and when at last he looked into the subject matter of the controversy, he had no hesitation about choosing his side. "There are forty of us in this Synod," said Leishman; and the party thus received the sobriquet of The Forty, sometimes the Forty Thieves. Their number was much larger; for they found many supporters beyond the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. Upon them the wrath of the Non-intrusion leaders fell hot and swift. Their vocabulary of abuse was copious; and its most violent terms were reserved for The Forty. They were never forgiven.<sup>3</sup> Nor did they receive much sympathy from the Moderates—some

<sup>3</sup> See *The Wheat and the Chaff*, an interesting example of scurrility. It consists of a list of the clergy of the Church of Scotland in 1843, and states the decision taken by each man at the Disruption. As often as the author comes on the name of one of The Forty, he becomes elaborately calumnious. Besides Leishman and Norman Macleod, The Forty included such men as Dr. Simpson of Kirknewton, Dr. John Paul of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, Balfour of Colinton (R. L. Stevenson's "Herd of Men"), Story of Rosneath, and Turner of Port of Menteith, whose *Scottish Secession of 1843* is by far the best account of the Disruption written by any one who came through it.

of whom were as *intransigent* as the Non-Intrusionists. Sympathising as they did with the desire to popularise the Church and to break down the system of patronage, they were not prepared to make that desire a reason for a schism. When the Disruption came, they refused to "go out"; and if the Church of Scotland recovered from the Disruption—as it quickly did—it was due on the whole to The Forty and their disciples.

Candlish and his friends, however, preferred more stormy methods. They established a newspaper, *The Witness*; and no greater piece of good fortune attended their cause than when they secured as its editor Hugh Miller, the Cromarty mason and geologist. Miller had a remarkable gift of pure and nervous English; and he could appeal to the common people as the ecclesiastical leaders, with all their talents, could not. He was the very embodiment of the type produced by the Disruption and the Disruption Church; and he and his newspaper probably did more than any other influence to secure a popular and enthusiastic following for the Free Church. Following the example of political parties, the Non-intrusionists sent their delegates through the country; and the suggestion was always insinuated, and sometimes bluntly and coarsely stated, that those who did not accept the Non-intrusion policy were actuated by the grossest motives, and were seeking to "tear the crown from the Redeemer's head." The press groaned with pamphlets, each more fiery than its predecessor. The ecclesiastical question invaded the pulpit; and psalms were selected to make congregations sing on one side or the other. Some of the Non-intrusionists had dreams of a great campaign of deposition, a war of attrition in which they would get rid of the Moderates one by one. Even Chalmers, who was larger at heart than most of his associates, and

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whose Non-intrusionist principles never quite got the upper hand of his native Moderatism, could speak of "deposing fifty or sixty of those men."<sup>4</sup>

In the General Assembly of 1842 the anti-patronage section at last obtained a majority. Henceforth Non-intrusion and anti-patronage were identified; and the Veto Act, originally designed in the hope of saving patronage from the rising tide of democracy, was now associated with anti-patronage. Ten years before Chalmers would have resisted an anti-patronage motion with all his might; he now supported it. Even the Moderates were content to record opposition on the ground that the motion was inexpedient "in present circumstances"; and the speech of Robertson of Ellon, who was no extremist, and who was now the ablest debater on the Moderate side, leaves the impression that, if the times had allowed the method of conference to be adopted instead of the parry and thrust of controversy, the differences between the two parties might not have proved too great for practical adjustment. But Sir George Sinclair had no imitators; and his attempt to reconcile parties had no apparent result save to make them more embittered than ever. The atmosphere of that General Assembly was as stormy as its predecessors; and its chief work was to adopt by 241 votes to 110 the historic manifesto of the Non-intrusion party—the *Claim, Declaration and Protest anent the encroachments of the Court of Session*, generally known as the *Claim of Right*. After the Disruption it became an official document of the Free Church; and every ordinand was required to declare his acceptance of it.

The *Claim* is a long and elaborate document, mainly the work of Alexander Murray Dunlop—"the purest

<sup>4</sup> Leishman, *op. cit.*, p. 49.



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of enthusiasts," as Cockburn calls him. It maintains that the Church of Scotland possesses in her own right a spiritual jurisdiction which, as is abundantly set forth in the Westminster Confession, is the gift of no secular authority, but flows directly from Christ, the Head of the Church; and this spiritual jurisdiction has been recognised and ratified in various statutes of the realm. Upon this jurisdiction, however, the courts of law have been making "encroachments." That which they recognised in their decisions of the eighteenth century they have been overturning by their decisions of the nineteenth; and the Church accordingly claims "as of right that she shall freely possess and enjoy her liberties, government, discipline, rights and privileges according to law." The corollary of the claim is a protest that all Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain "passed without the consent of this church and nation," as well as all judgments of law courts, which in any degree alter or diminish the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, shall be "in themselves void and null and of no legal force and effect." From beginning to end the *Claim* is an appeal to the past. It is a demand for the restoration of a former condition of affairs. Whether that former condition of affairs is correctly described, whether the authors of the *Claim* made the distinction, which their counsel made so pointedly in his pleading in the Auchterarder case, between the Church as a spiritual institution and the Church as a visible organisation, whether the premisses of the *Claim* will support its conclusions, whether the assertions of its long preamble are statements of fact or Non-intrusionist glosses, are questions to which opposite answers have been given.<sup>5</sup> The Non-intrusionists based their contentions on their

<sup>5</sup> For opposite views see Moncreiff's *Vindication of the Claim of Right* and Andrew MacGeorge's *The Statements in the Claim of Right; are they True?*

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interpretation of the history of the Church of Scotland—an interpretation which has been accepted by no one except themselves; and the *Claim* is important, not because of its contents, but because under the guise of an historical statement it reflects the attitude of its supporters to certain circumstances of their own time.

In moving the adoption of the *Claim* Chalmers adverted to the danger lurking behind the aphorism, "Might is Right." At the moment he was thinking of what he and his followers regarded as the violent treatment of the Church by the courts of law; for in their bitterness the Non-intrusionists had conjured up a vision of malignant judges persecuting the Church for the mere pleasure of doing so. It may well be, however, that he was vaguely conscious of a real problem of government which was destined to become more acute as the nineteenth century idea of nationality crystallised. Both in England and Scotland, as in other nations, it was felt by many that the territorial State, being local, did not possess ultimate authority; for such authority can belong only to something which is universal and which transcends the geographical limits of territorial states. The authority of a state over the bodies and possessions of its citizens does not extend to their consciences; for conscience cannot be localised or made subservient to the temporal interests of a territorial state. It follows that the sovereignty of the State cannot include the Church, a spiritual association cemented together by the free working of conscience. The Reform Bill marked the coming of the Secular State, the State which deliberately stands aloof from all religious considerations, and has regard only to temporal interests. It is important therefore to assert the autonomy of the Church; for that is a correlative of the Secular State. In adopting the *Claim*

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*of Right*, with its extravagant language and its impossible demands, the Non-intrusionists were raising the question which had been left unanswered at the Revolution Settlement. The life of the Church, with its discipline, government and jurisdiction, did not spring, and could not spring, from king or from nation or from any other embodiment of temporal sovereignty. It sprang from God; and therefore the Church within the Secular State could not rest content until it was in a position to carry on all the necessary functions of an autonomous society without the interference or supervision of the State. The Non-intrusionists put this bluntly and emphatically. It is necessary at the same time to bear in mind that the fundamental principle, which they declared with such passion, was held with equal sincerity by their opponents; and the difference between the parties was purely on questions of detail and method.

The *Claim of Right* was rejected by the Government, though a number of Scottish members supported a motion for a committee of enquiry. The rejection was inevitable; for the Non-intrusionists were doing nothing to lessen the real difficulties of the Government. The Strathbogie ministers were still kept under the ban; and certain prominent Moderates, not all of the *intransigent* type, were suspended from judicial functions for nine months, because they had assisted the seven in the celebration of Holy Communion. Meanwhile a second Auchterarder case had gone on its way to the House of Lords. The presbytery of Auchterarder declined to do what the presbytery of Strathbogie had done; and patron and presentee accordingly brought and won an action for damages. The judgment opened to the Non-intrusionists a prospect of presbytery after presbytery being mulcted

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in damages every time that the Veto Act was put into operation; and the only alternative to that was that presbytery after presbytery should do as the presbytery of Strathbogie had done and disregard the edicts of the Non-intrusionist leaders. "The Church," said Candlish, meaning by that term the party of which he was the leader, "cannot go on upon those terms"; and the second Auchterarder decision thus precipitated the movement for secession.

The final act was heralded by a "Convocation," held in Edinburgh in November, 1842, to which only the "right-minded" were summoned. The meetings went on for six days in the Roxburgh Chapel, a small place of worship in a back street, and were attended by ministers from all parts of the country. In many, perhaps in most, cases the members attended under the impression that they would not be required to take any pledge; and some announced their intention of returning to their manse as free as when they went. But so adroit was the management of the conference and so strong the personal influence of its organisers that, though some faint remonstrances were made, and some not unimportant men escaped from the net, nearly every one returned from the Convocation pledged to secede, if the Government persisted in refusing their demands. The leaders must have known perfectly the minds of the politicians; and with them the Convocation was simply part of the procedure for bringing about successfully the secession on which they had determined. Many of the rank and file gave the pledge with no expectation that they would ever be called upon to fulfil it. Funds were collected with the utmost diligence; and these were large enough to warrant the expectation that no one would suffer financially by leaving the Church of Scotland. All over the country

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public meetings were held for the purpose of inducing as many as possible to follow the Non-intrusionist lead;<sup>6</sup> and at those meetings it was invariably assumed, and plainly stated, that no one could stand apart from the Non-intrusionist cause without being unfaithful to Christ. "The Lord Jesus Christ will have left the Church when we go," said one speaker; and his remark was typical of the party. It has been said that the opponents of Non-intrusion were blind to what was going on, and proceeded in the expectation that only a handful would secede. There is no ground for that statement. The extreme section of the Moderates watched the course of events with a certain disdain; but by this time some of them were looking forward to the prospect of a secession with a sense of relief. Robertson of Ellon, however—"the second name and the first man in his party," as Hugh Miller called him—was under no delusion as to the probable extent of the secession. Neither were such men as Leishman or Norman Macleod or the representative men of the Middle party. If the politicians were taken by surprise—and it does not appear that they were—it was not for lack of correct forecasts from the men whom they had been consulting.

The Veto Act had been declared illegal; and in January, 1843, a similar fate befell the Chapel Act. Cuninghame of Lainshaw, a friend and supporter of Chalmers, and a heritor in the parish of Stewarton, Ayrshire, objected to a chapel<sup>7</sup> in that parish being raised to the status of a parish church in terms of the

<sup>6</sup> For accounts of Non-intrusion meetings see Charteris, *A Faithful Churchman*, p. 32; Macleod, *Life of Norman Macleod*, p. 125; Story, *Robert Story of Rosneath*, p. 281.

<sup>7</sup> The chapel in question was formerly a church of the Old Light Burghers, who had recently re-united with the Church of Scotland.

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Act; and the Court of Session upheld his plea. The decision threw a large part of the machinery of the Church out of gear. Not a presbytery in which a chapel minister had taken his seat, not a General Assembly to which presbyteries thus constituted had sent commissioners, but its proceedings were invalidated by this decision. The immediate effect of the decision was seen in the presbytery of Irvine, in which the parish of Stewarton lay. Norman Macleod was moderator of the presbytery at the time; and it fell to him to give a ruling that no chapel minister or elder could take part in the business of the presbytery.<sup>8</sup> The result was a separation within the presbytery. From Irvine, as from other presbyteries which contained a number of chapels, two returns of representatives were made to the General Assembly; and each party was prepared to disqualify the commissioners chosen by its rival. Party feeling rose to an extraordinary pitch; and no sort of communication, public or private, went on between the parties.

On May 18, 1843, the General Assembly met in St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh. The Non-intrusionists had carefully prepared an impressive procedure<sup>9</sup> which

<sup>8</sup> "Only think of this—just think of it—that I, Norman Macleod, shall certainly be OBLIGED to make THE move which will beyond a doubt first separate the Church into two parts!! . . . The explosion is to come, and I!!! must fire the train."—*Life*, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> The procedure of the General Assembly requires that, before it can proceed to business, the roll of members must be made up, a Moderator must be elected, and the Lord High Commissioner received. As the result of the Stewarton decision, the commissions from many presbyteries were open to doubt; and the roll of members would therefore be made up with very great difficulty. Every chapel minister would be excluded; every minister or elder, whose commission had been given by presbyteries which had allowed chapel ministers to vote, would be challenged and probably disqualified. The Non-intrusionists could thus no longer count on a majority. If they could have secured a majority, they would probably have waited until the General Assembly was in a position to proceed to its business, and made the act of secession a formal act of the court.

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could not fail to strike the popular imagination. In the presence of an excited multitude Dr. Welsh, the retiring Moderator, took the chair. After prayer, he intimated that, in consequence of the refusal of the Government to accept the *Claim of Right*, it was no longer possible for him and those who concurred with him to continue in that house. He read and laid on the table a lengthy document, signed by the majority of those who were prepared to follow him, in which they protested that in withdrawing from that house they were proving their claim to be regarded as the true General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. With a bow to the Royal Commissioner he left the building and was instantly followed by almost the whole of the Non-intrusionist party. Outside St. Andrew's a large concourse—by no means all of one mind—watched the long procession as three abreast the seceders marched down the hill to a spacious hall at Canonmills which had been prepared for the occasion. There the Free Church of Scotland came into being. A new General Assembly was constituted with the assertion that it, and not the “remnant” in St. Andrew's, was the true successor of former General Assemblies. Chalmers, who was the figure-head of the Disruption, and whose adhesion had done much to make the cause popular, was elected Moderator, and forthwith gave out the psalm:—

O send Thy light forth and Thy truth;  
Let them be guides to me;  
And bring me to Thine holy hill,  
Even where Thy dwellings be.

The chronicler relates how the day had been overcast by a heavy thundercloud, which made the dim interior of the hall so dark as to render it almost impossible to distinguish faces. As the familiar psalm rolled upwards from a thousand voices, the cloud parted and a ray of

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dazzling light filled the hall. Many saw in the coincidence a manifest token of divine favour, forgetting for the moment that the ray had shone on St. Andrew's Church as well as on Canonmills. But if divine favour can be inferred from popular approval, there was much that day to encourage the Seceders. Many, who were not susceptible to religious impressions, were ready to applaud so dramatic a proceeding. What the crowd in the street saw that day was that a large body of ministers and elders, including a majority of the ministers of the city, men justly held in honour, were voluntarily resigning all their worldly possessions rather than be false to their consciences. Jeffrey, who had no religious enthusiasm and probably no religious belief, said that he was proud of his country. But even in the crowds on the pavements there were some who looked below the surface; and Sir William Hamilton, by no means the least shrewd observer of men and things, said something about being "martyrs by mistake."

Those who organised the Disruption had at first sight good cause to be satisfied with their efforts. Out of 1203 ministers 451 left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church; and among the laity the proportion was probably somewhat larger. The men of the Disruption were never able to forget the incident in which they had taken part; and for years they spoke of it as if it had been the most noteworthy event of all Church history. It was not uncommon for them to say that all the talent and all the piety of the Church had "gone out." Such statements were not unnatural in a period of excitement; nevertheless they were the merest nonsense. It is according to the nature of things that a new institution should magnify its eponyms; and in this respect the Free Church was like the rest of



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mankind. In point of fact there was no difference in character or ability between the two sides. Each was composed of the same materials, good and bad, as the other. Out of many instances that might be quoted it is perhaps sufficient to select one, drawn from the conduct of the two greatest churchmen of the period. Of two Scottish churchmen of the nineteenth century, and only two, can it be said that they were great enough to command the affection of all classes and to become household words in Scotland; and it is impossible to say which played the greater part in the making of their church and nation. They were both present in St. Andrew's Church on the day of the Disruption; and they took opposite sides—Chalmers "going out" and Norman Macleod staying "in."

In some parts of the country the Free Church seemed to carry everything before it. In the principal towns—Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Perth, Paisley, even in Aberdeen on the fringe of the "Dead Sea of Moderatism"—most of the pulpits were emptied; and the secession of the minister meant as a rule the secession of the greater part of the congregation. There, however, the steady flow of population from rural areas to the towns changed in course of time the relative position of the churches; and many of the deserted parish churches, in which only a dozen or a score assembled on the Sunday after the Disruption, were again filled with congregations as large as before. In the Northern Highlands the Moderates were swept away. Preachers like Kennedy of Dingwall, and Macdonald of Ferintosh wielded an authority as absolute as could be enjoyed by chiefs of ancient lineage; and at their bidding the counties of Ross, Sutherland and Caithness "went out" almost to a man. Where other means did not succeed, violence might be

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used without censure from those in authority. A system as strong and relentless as an Irish boycott crushed in all but the strongest any lingering desire to cleave to the Church of Scotland. To a date within living memory the Free Church held the Northern Highlands in the hollow of its hand. Practically all the foreign missionaries of the Church adhered to the Disruption; and the spell of Chalmers was sufficient to draw after him the majority of the students of Divinity.

It has been usual, in speaking of the Disruption, to lay stress on the sacrifices of the men who "went out." That there were considerable sacrifices in individual cases, cannot be doubted; and these were borne on the whole in an honourable spirit. But the current descriptions are greatly exaggerated; and many who seceded, so far from losing, gained by the change. Thus, more than a third of the ministers who "went out" were chapel ministers, who left behind them neither manse nor endowments, and in many instances were able to keep even the churches in which they had been ministering. The real sufferings of the period fell on the men who stayed "in." The task left for them was almost beyond their power; and at every step the implacable hostility of the Free Church had to be reckoned with. "The glow of the Disruption," of which many Free Church writers speak with admiration, became a glow of personal hatred towards all who declined to accept Disruption principles. Attendance at the parish church was described as a sign of religious indifference and moral laxity. The parish minister—so Hugh Miller advised, and so a multitude of his readers acted—was to be regarded as "the one excommunicated man of the district." Amid all the bitter controversies of Scottish history there is nothing equal to the outburst of calumny with which

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Free Churchmen assailed the brethren from whom they had parted.

Of those who remained "in," many believed as strongly as the Non-intrusionists that there was urgent necessity for reform in the Church; and these did not all belong by any means to the Middle party. They differed from the Free Church not so much over the merits of their contentions as over the methods which had been adopted. The controversy seemed to exhaust the powers of the older Moderates who had borne the brunt of the battle since the passing of the Veto Act; and after the Disruption they were content with securing the immediate annulment of those Non-intrusionist measures which they regarded as obnoxious—the Veto Act, the Chapel Act or the deposition of the Strathbogie ministers. The leadership passed quickly into the hands of younger men—Robertson of Ellon, for example, or Norman Macleod—who, believing firmly that their cause was just, set themselves to build up again the shattered walls. "Not returning railing for railing," said Robertson, as he called his fellow-churchmen to concentrate on the tasks before them. More than four hundred vacancies had to be filled; and the material for filling them was somewhat mixed. Recruits had to be gained for the empty Divinity Halls. Missions abroad had to be maintained, re-staffed and advanced. Church Extension, for which Robertson inherited the enthusiasm and the ability of Chalmers, had to be carried on at a faster pace and on a wider scale. The constitutional problem, which the Non-intrusionists had felt so sharply, had to be solved without their help. All this had to be done in the face of relentless opposition from the Free Church. The records of the General Assembly in 1843 and for some years afterwards show the immense difficulties with

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which the Church of Scotland had to contend. But those prosaic annals reveal also with what courage, enthusiasm and faith the leaders of the Church of Scotland braced themselves to their task.

The Free Church expected the Church of Scotland to collapse quickly. All through the Disruption controversy, and for two generations afterwards, the Non-intrusionists made the blunder of not estimating correctly the forces opposed to themselves; and thus they were unable to discern the real strength of the Church which they treated with such scornful intolerance. They assumed, without pausing to enquire whether their assumption had any basis of fact, that in all things spiritual the Church of Scotland was bankrupt beyond hope of recovery; and this assumption, reacting upon their own religious life, was the cause of no small part of their own denominational perplexities in later days. The leaders of the Church of Scotland made no such mistake. They set themselves to the repairing of the breaches without assailing the Free Church. They understood, what no representative Free Churchman admitted for many years, that differences with regard to local details of ecclesiastical polity did not imply failure in the fundamental loyalties of the Christian faith. They believed that the bitter controversy did not affect the underlying unity of the Scottish Church. Nothing could be done, of course, while the Free Church was still in its first flush and disdained all association with the Moderate Church; but they recognised that no solution of the ecclesiastical problem could be finally satisfactory which did not take both Free Church and Church of Scotland into reckoning.

Some there were—mostly among the laity of the landed classes—who waited to see the Free Church burn

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itself out after a few years of aggressive fanaticism. But they were wrong—as far wrong as the Non-intrusionists who watched for the crumbling of the Church of Scotland. Within a few years the Free Church created an organisation almost as complete as that which it had left. Its aim was to plant its standard in every parish; and it succeeded in doing this in the great majority of parishes, though many congregations came into existence through local causes which had nothing to do with the Disruption controversy. Churches, manses, schools, colleges, missions—the Free Church equipped itself rapidly and easily with them all. In particular—and this was its greatest achievement—it quickly trained its people in the difficult ‘virtue of contributing adequately to the maintenance of their church. From the very beginning the members of the Free Church were taught to think first of the needs of the Church as a whole, and to regard their own congregation, not as a separate institution, but as merely the local representative of a Church which was as wide as the nation. Thanks to the ability of Chalmers as a financial administrator, a Sustentation Fund was established for the maintenance of the clergy on the principle that all should share alike. Every minister and every congregation, no matter how poor or remote, should be conscious of having the support of the whole Church. The Sustentation Fund never completely fulfilled the dreams of its founder. It consolidated the Free Church, and created throughout the denomination a sense of unity and of common purpose. But as the majority of Free Church congregations, especially in rural areas, received more from the Fund than they gave to it, the Fund centralised the Free Church, increased the power of the leaders and their committees at the expense of the presbyteries,

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and threw the Church into the hands of the wealthy commercial and industrial magnates without whose subscriptions the Disruption would not have taken place.

The Free Church came into being as a witness to the Spiritual Independence of the Church. With Voluntaryism—the doctrine that the civil magistrate has “nothing to do” with religion—it refused to hold any parley. “We are not Voluntaries,” said Chalmers with all emphasis. The Free Church declared that the right of self-government was an inalienable prerogative of the Church of Christ; and it maintained that by their recent action both law courts and legislature were withholding from the Church that spiritual freedom which the Church had no right to lay aside or Caesar to curtail. It believed definitely in Establishment. The civil magistrate, it held, was bound to recognise and support the Church; but the existing establishment was so seriously defective that it was impossible to exercise within it those functions of self-government without which no church could rightly be called a church. “We quit a vitiated establishment,” said Chalmers, “and would rejoice in returning to a pure one.” Whether the Free Church drew correct inferences from the legal decisions against which it protested, was argued vigorously for many years; and at the end of the debate the controversialists remained in precisely the same positions as at the beginning. But by departing from the Establishment and creating a new denomination the Free Church did nothing to solve the problem which it felt so acutely. Henceforth its organisation and its property were governed by the law of trusts—a law which permits small deviation from an original constitution; and as the nineteenth century wore on, several incidents—chiefly lawsuits connected,

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some with the Church of Scotland, some with the Free Church, some with the non-established churches — combined to suggest that, “vitiating” or not, the existing Establishment gave more opportunity for the practical exercise of spiritual autonomy as defined by the Free Church than the new organisation which the Free Church had created so successfully for itself. As one incident followed another, many formed the definite opinion that the Church of Scotland was in reality the freest church in Europe, and that, while the Free Church spoke so insistently of spiritual independence, it in point of fact possessed no such thing. To hold a tenet was one thing; it was another thing to translate that tenet into concrete reality. In that process both State and Church would require to co-operate; and the Free Church made no attempt to bring that about. The Disruption raised an important question; but it provided no answer. As a gesture it was magnificent; but it was not an achievement. Seventy years of controversy and discomfort had to go past before any practical attempt was made to realise the spiritual independence of which the Disruption Church spoke so eloquently; and when the attempt was at last made, the initiative came not from the Free Church but from within the Church of Scotland.

## CHAPTER XII.

### EPILOGUE.

IT is impossible in an epilogue to deal adequately with the course of church history in Scotland since 1843. It must suffice to give in broad outline a narrative of events and tendencies.

At the time, and for some forty years afterwards, the situation created by the Disruption seemed to be final. Both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church acted on the assumption that the cleavage in the Church would be permanent. If any change were to take place, it could only be through the overwhelming of one side by the other. Either the members of the Free Church, discovering their error, must come "back" one by one to the Church of Scotland; or the Church of Scotland must be broken up and disbanded, and its people shepherded into the fold of the Free Church. Meanwhile other influences were at work which, gathering strength with the years, at last diverted attention from the ecclesiastical controversy and compelled churchmen of all types to concentrate upon matters of wider import. The Disruption ceased to be an epoch and became an episode. The jangling of the sects became meaningless, then stupid, and finally intolerable; and under the pressure of new enthusiasms the broken Church of Scotland re-united.

At the middle of the century the Church of the Revolution Settlement was marshalled in three divisions, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church, and the United Presbyterian Church. The first two were



to be found in every parish; the third was strong in the cities and industrial regions. The sight of three steeples in every village might have suggested to the casual observer that the influence of the Church in Scottish life was very powerful; but on enquiring more closely he would have discovered how greatly that influence was reduced by the unsleeping jealousies which forbade all co-operation. The real weakness of the Church was revealed in certain important Acts of Parliament which would probably have taken a very different form if the Church had been undivided, and which deprived the Church of direct control in spheres of social duty where she had held undisputed authority for centuries. In 1845 the new Poor Law dispelled for ever Chalmers' dream; and the care of the poor, which had been maintained almost wholly by the voluntary offerings of the Church, became henceforth a national, secular responsibility. In 1852 university tests were abolished, except for theological professors. In 1872 the Education Act established a national system of compulsory education, and transferred the care of the schools entirely to the State. Those Acts did not perhaps impair the indirect influence of the churches or the personal authority of individual churchmen; and the care of the poor and the management of the schools remained largely in the hands of ministers and elders of the churches. But of the three departments of Church duty described in the *First Book of Discipline* two were within a generation taken altogether out of the hands of the Church and put under the management of the State.

By 1850 the Union of 1707 had completed its work. Retaining her national characteristics and to a certain extent her national consciousness, Scotland became almost wholly assimilated to England; and during the

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nineteenth century no substantial difference was discernible between the two countries in the formative influences of political, social or religious thought. Railways and steamships broke down the barriers which had hitherto separated localities; old traditions and usages disappeared; and the march of scientific progress widened the outlook and altered the currents of thought and ambition. The rapid growth of the British dominions in Canada and Australasia, the development of British power in India, the annexation of enormous territories in Africa, the vast tide of emigration to the United States, all reacted upon Scottish life. Most important of all, however, was the shifting of the social centre of gravity from the country to the town. In 1850 Scotland was still largely agricultural. By the end of the nineteenth century the majority of the inhabitants of Scotland were town-dwellers, having no connection with, or knowledge of, rural life; and two-thirds of the population were gathered round the mines and industries of the Scottish Midlands. In 1850 the most weighty factor in political and social life was the employer of labour; and power was largely in the hands of the commercial and professional classes. By the end of the century the extension of the franchise had transferred power to the wage-earning classes, especially to their highly organised trade unions; and the interests of labour claimed precedence over all other political and social questions. In all this there was nothing peculiarly Scottish; and the currents of opinion which could be traced in Glasgow and Lanarkshire were precisely the same as in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds or any other industrial centre beyond the Border. During the second half of the nineteenth century Great Britain enjoyed a period of material prosperity such as has never been

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seen in the history of any state. She dominated the commerce and industry of the world so completely and so easily that her people accepted her supremacy as part of the natural order of things; and in spite of the acid criticism of certain of her own thinkers, the prevailing temper was a complacency which easily declined into smugness.

Side by side with the economic progress of the century, and subtly influenced by it, was an intellectual movement, the first sounds of which had already been heard in Scotland before they were drowned for a space by the uproar of the Ten Years' Conflict. The nineteenth century saw the rise of the Idealist philosophy, a philosophy which completely displaced the mechanistic thought of an earlier period. The native soil of Idealism was Germany, where it produced such teachers as Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, teachers of so great power and insight that the world was well content to sit at their feet. In Britain the representative speakers of the period were all deeply influenced—Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin; and of these Carlyle, a Scottish Calvinist transformed into an Idealist, spoke with an authority greater and more immediate than any other. Carlyle himself acknowledged obedience to no ecclesiastical system; but his teaching did much to change the type of thought and expression in all the churches. "The universe is, as Goethe says, a living garment of Deity, a garment through which he reveals Himself to the eye of poet and prophet, and in a measure to every one who is prepared to see." The universe is not a machine but a living organism, permeated in all its parts by the immanent spirit of God. Teaching of this sort was widely different from the stiff dogmatism which had held the field in the days of Evangelical ascendancy.

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Further, the nineteenth century was the age of science. In one direction science produced a hard, utilitarian type of mind, which paid heed only to immediate practical results; and this mind denied the worth of anything spiritual. The Church had hitherto operated in a society which on the whole accepted the Christian faith and ethic, and in which the only subjects of debate had been the varying tenets of the sects. It now had to turn its attention to a widely diffused temper, which not only cared nothing for sectarian distinctions, but bluntly declared that neither Christianity nor any other religion possessed any value. More important, however, the age of science gave rise to the theory of Evolution. Applied at first to organic life, it was quickly extended to all things knowable; and social life, history, and religion were all explained in terms of a theory which took hold very quickly not only of the educated mind but also of the popular consciousness. The theory of Evolution seemed to some to undermine the postulates of Christianity; and for many years much of the energy of the Church was devoted to the study of the relations between science and religion. In the end it was learned, not without much contention and travail, that there is no necessary hostility between them; but in the process the traditional views of religion underwent a great change. Interest receded steadily from the minor, sectarian details which had formerly bulked so largely, and concentrated upon the central truths of religion. Within the Church, and indeed beyond its borders also, the interest grew to excitement when it was discovered that science was invading the sacred disciplines, and that the same critical methods, which had been applied to the history of ancient Rome, and had changed altogether the familiar view of it, were being applied to the Bible. It seemed as if religion

itself were menaced; and churchmen who declared for the new methods were fiercely accused of disloyalty to their faith. In the end it was discovered that the Bible was no "statute-book," whereof all parts had equal value, but the record of a marvellous religious development; and the inspiration of the Bible and the reality of Revelation, so far from being injured, were seen in a nobler setting than ever. Biblical criticism, the theory of Evolution, the Idealistic philosophy, instead of being enemies, proved to be allies of the Christian faith; but the process of making this momentous discovery changed the outlook of the Church as it had not been changed for centuries. By the end of the century churchmen of all types were following methods of thought and expression which would have been unintelligible sixty years earlier; and the experience of Scottish churchmen was not greatly different from the experience of churchmen in other lands.

The ferment of the nineteenth century produced a new religious phenomenon—the type of thought which was generally, if vaguely, described as Doubt. It was essentially a religious type, in so far as it recognised that the supreme interest in life is the relation of man to the spiritual. But it accepted no affirmations, and met all the statements of organised religion with a question. Its most prominent expression was Agnosticism, the temper which did not deny the existence of God, but declared that the human mind had no knowledge of Him and that no knowledge of Him was possible. In one form or another Doubt made itself felt in all the religious life of the period; and the preachers of the century found it necessary to address themselves constantly to minds which, however willing to believe, found it difficult to accept without question such cardinal truths as the Being and Perfection of God,

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the Incarnation, the Resurrection of Christ, the Inspiration of the Scriptures or the Immortality of the Soul. The constant necessity of dealing with fundamental beliefs led the churches to place less emphasis upon the questions which had divided them—usually matters only of local interest—and to allow the central truths, which are held in practically the same form in all the churches, to bulk more largely in their minds than previously.

At the Disruption, and for more than thirty years afterwards, the Free Church was rigidly and passionately conservative in its doctrine. It accepted the Westminster Confession literally; and the slightest deviation was regarded with horror. Its features were a Calvinistic orthodoxy of the stiffest type and an iron Puritanism of manners; and it looked upon itself as the guardian, the only guardian, of the true faith of the Scottish Church. All other branches of the Church, and especially the Church of Scotland, were regarded as inferior, morally, spiritually and intellectually. The United Presbyterian Church was on the whole equally conservative in its doctrine; but its conservatism was less aggressive, less censorious. Of its two wings, the Relief had brought into it a spirit of tolerance and catholicity. The other wing, the Secession, had dealt recently with the Morisonians (1841), a group which expressed views closely resembling the views of John Macleod Campbell; but though the "heretics" were cast out, the leaven remained at work in the body from which they were expelled, to produce interesting results at a later date. Both Free Church and United Presbyterian Church looked on the Church of Scotland with undisguised hostility. Seizing eagerly upon any means of attack, opponents of the Church of Scotland accused it of being

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unfaithful to the truth because it tolerated a Broad Church group which kept alive the teaching of Macleod Campbell; and representative speakers often called out for disestablishment as a fitting punishment for failing to maintain inviolate the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession.

The Broad Church group was small; and its doings were watched with dislike by many within the Church of Scotland. More than once an attempt was made to bring some culprit to the bar; but in each case the attempt was unsuccessful. It was long before the rigid, uninspired conventionalism of the middle years of the century gave way; but the tide was with the Broad Church group and not with their opponents. The most effective influence in Scottish church life came from this small group. There was no preacher in Scotland like Caird, no teacher so stimulating as Tulloch, no personality so persuasive as Norman Macleod. More and more it became clear that the Evangelicalism, which had been so full of life and power in the opening years of the century, had petrified into a tradition. "The awful conviction is deeply pressing itself upon me," wrote Macleod, "that the gospel is not preached generally in Scotland, that so-called Evangelicalism is Judaism, that the name of God, Father, Son and Spirit, which is Love, is not revealed but concealed." In the hands of weaker men the Broad Church doctrines sometimes became mere criticisms and negations; but the captains of the movement, standing always for positive ideas, declared a gospel that was universal, spoke of the Fatherhood of God more than of His sovereignty, and led the way back from the traditionalists and their cast-iron dogmas to the study of the Person, Life and Teaching of Christ. By the end of the century the old rigidity had disappeared so completely from

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Scottish life that few could have believed that it ever existed.

Side by side with the Broad Church movement, and integrally connected with it, was the movement for order and beauty in the services of the Church, of which the leader and martyr was Dr. Robert Lee of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh. The public worship of the Church had become exceedingly dreary and meaningless; and the slightest deviation from the ordinary routine aroused much anger. Churches were meanly furnished, often without any provision for the Sacraments, and were kept in a disgraceful condition of uncleanness; and men scoffed at the idea that beauty and reverence might be expressed in the arrangement or upkeep of a building. Prayers were long, rambling, and rhapsodical; no order of subjects was recognised in them; and their language was rarely scriptural and never liturgical. The music of the Church was utterly unworthy. Even the reading of the Scriptures in church had fallen a good deal out of use. Besides the secession to the Free Church, which, though large, showed no signs of increasing, there was going on a large, silent secession to the Episcopal Church on the part of Presbyterians who were sick of the noise of the Ten Years' Conflict, and whose sense of decency and order was offended by the degradation of the Church's ritual. At Old Greyfriars Lee introduced a liturgy which he had compiled for the use of his congregation; and for this he was brought more than once to the bar of the church courts. His crusade went on for ten years, during the whole of which time he was denounced in language of extraordinary bitterness by men both of his own and other churches. He died in 1867 on the eve of the General Assembly at which the Old Greyfriars case was to come up for



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decisive judgment ; but the manner of his death silenced his opponents and brought victory to his cause.

Of the many controversies which have been fought at the bar of the church courts in Scotland since the Disruption, none has been more important than the case of Lee. He aimed at no mere improvement in ritual, though that in itself might have been beneficial in a slovenly age. His crusade was for the restoration of the idea of worship as the primary necessity in church life—an idea which had fallen out of sight in Scotland since the days of the Solemn League and Covenant. It marked the first step in the process, not yet complete, of exorcising the Puritanism which for two centuries has obscured the real life of the Scottish Church. It was the first of several creative movements which enabled the Church of Scotland to recover from the shock of the Disruption, and which, starting in the Church of Scotland, ultimately changed the life of all the churches.

The work which Lee commenced was carried on by the Church Service Society, a society which had for its object the preparation of suitable rituals for the services of the Church. Lee's own models were not greatly followed ; for the society, while revering the memory of the pioneer, preferred to draw from more catholic sources. At first it was hotly denounced as likely to bring into the Church of Scotland all the most alarming practices of Romanism and Anglo-Catholicism ; but in the end it influenced deeply, and almost revolutionised, the public worship not only of the Church of Scotland but of the other churches. The process was slow ; but little by little order, seemliness and beauty began once more to characterise the worship of Scottish Presbyterians. Along with the liturgical improvement went a very necessary improvement in music. The

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organ was introduced into church after church, though at first it was much resented and gave rise to many congregational quarrels. The use of hymns had already begun in the United Presbyterian Church (1851). The Church of Scotland issued the *Scottish Hymnal* in 1870; and the Free Church published its hymn book in 1881. By the end of the century denominational jealousies had subsided sufficiently to allow co-operation in the compilation of the *Church Hymnary*. The United Presbyterian Church led the way in the improvement of church buildings, though at first and for a long time the "bonny U.P. kirks" were not constructed on good models. Better architecture, and especially better provision for the administration of the Sacraments, followed through the influence of the Scottish Church Society, a small organisation of definitely High Church sympathies, which has leavened the Church of Scotland out of all proportion to its membership. With the increasing concentration upon the Gospels and the Life and Teaching of Christ came the observance of the cardinal festivals of the Christian year.

The same influences, which caused the Broad Church movement in the Church of Scotland, brought the Higher Criticism of the Scriptures to the colleges of the Free Church. It was not a welcome guest. The Free Church prided itself on its orthodoxy; and as a legacy from the Evangelical movement which had brought it into being, it regarded the Bible as inspired word for word, and as an authoritative oracle of God placed by Him in the hands of believers to be the only sure guide of faith and morals. Throughout the membership of the Free Church the traditional views were held of the structure, authorship and authenticity of the Scriptures; and to depart by a hairbreadth from

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these was an offence so shocking as to be almost unthinkable. All the more alarming was the discovery that "German" liberalism had invaded the Free Church colleges, and that Professor Robertson Smith of the Aberdeen College had published views regarding the Old Testament which seemed to the orthodox to deprive it of all right to be regarded as divinely inspired. The English cases of *Essays and Reviews* and of Bishop Colenso were still fresh in the public mind, and to the orthodox these were shocking enough. The feeling was so strong that at last Robertson Smith was brought to trial in the church courts of the Free Church. The case was long and complicated. The various stages occupied several years; and the final decision was not reached till 1881. The trial was of remarkable interest for many reasons. It revealed a sharp division of opinion within the Free Church between the conservative opinion of the Northern Highlands and the progressive mind of the South. The narrative has much to say also of a struggle between certain groups for leadership in the Free Church. Further, there is the dramatic interest, to which parallels can be found in the records of all churches, of a contest between two types of mind which seem always to be incapable of understanding one another—Robertson Smith, the pure student and seeker after truth, utterly surprised at discovering in how many minds the quest for truth can be obscured by other interests, and Rainy, the callous ecclesiastic, intent only on managing his team, careless of what happens to the seeker after truth or even to truth itself so long as the peace of his realm is maintained. In the end the merits of the case were left undecided. Administrative action took the place of judicial decision; and Robertson Smith was

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dismissed from his post. The long debates revealed, however, that the new learning had already won a firm foothold within the Free Church. Its supporters proved to be more numerous among both clergy and laity than had been expected by those who had set the case in motion. Far from being alone, Robertson Smith was only the most conspicuous representative of a movement which had been progressing quietly for years and had now gained many adherents. During the case he had behind him a large number—large enough, indeed, to obtain a majority on one important occasion; and among the number were found the names of many who were to add great lustre to the Free Church colleges during the next generation. In his own city of Aberdeen the sympathy and admiration of the laity were shewn in unmistakable fashion. The case proved to be the decisive battle between the old school and the new; and though it ended in the defeat of Robertson Smith himself, he won nevertheless a notable victory for freedom. During the next twenty years other Higher Critics were brought to the bar. The same forces took the field; but on each occasion it became clear that the old, rigid formalism was disappearing. In every instance the accused was acquitted. The colleges of the Free Church became famous homes of learning. The Free Church, which formerly had prided itself upon its unbending conservatism of thought, learned to glory in the liberalism of its colleges—a liberalism all the more remarkable because in the Church of Scotland the contemporary tendency was working away from the Broad Church movement towards a more emphatic assertion of Catholic faith and practice. Many years before, Chalmers, watching uneasily certain influences at work at the heart of the Evangelical movement, had understood the necessity

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of bringing the study of theology and kindred disciplines to a standard not lower than was attained in other branches of learning. In spite of many unsympathetic and even hostile influences, his hopes were at length justified; but so far as the Free Church colleges were concerned, they were justified only because of the battle which Robertson Smith had fought.

It was inevitable that sooner or later the Broad Church movement would re-awaken the question of the relation of the Church to the Westminster Confession. That Confession was incorporated in the Revolution Settlement as one of the three marks of identity of the Church of Scotland; and thus the relation of the Church to it was part of the general question of the relation between Church and State in Scotland. The non-established churches all accepted the Westminster Confession; and its place in their denominational articles accordingly affected their position in the eyes of the law. The Westminster Confession was also one of the long series of Confessions of Faith which were drawn up in the days when the tide of Calvinistic doctrine was running strongly through all Western Europe; and the question in Scotland was thus part of a wider problem which concerned the whole family of the Reformed Churches. Unfortunately, the sharpness of local controversy made it practically impossible for Scottish Presbyterians to consider the matter apart from their domestic quarrel. Here and there a voice might be heard recalling the kinship of the Scottish churches with other churches in other lands; but as a rule the most pressing consideration was the local question of Church and State. Neither the Church of Scotland nor the Free Church was in a mood to co-operate in this or any other matter. Neither could afford to act

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boldly or speak freely lest an incautious step might give a diplomatic advantage to a sleepless opponent. Ecclesiastical caution, however, was unable to stem a movement which could make itself felt in every part of the kingdom. If the Church was to keep in touch with the living thought of the time, it was necessary to deal with the Westminster Confession.

In 1880 a group of Broad Churchmen produced *Scotch Sermons*, a volume which purported to give specimens of a "style of preaching which increasingly prevails among the clergy of the Scottish Church." The contributors were all men of weight in their day and leading representatives of the liberal school of thought. The book, however, earned no other fame than to bring on a mild case in the General Assembly. Indeed, when the book appeared, the day of the Broad Church party was already passing. The party tended thereafter to diminish rather than to increase; but it did not disappear till it had leavened the whole Church. At the same time it became increasingly evident that the main current of thought in Scotland was anxious to preserve continuity with the doctrinal "testimony" of the Reformed Churches, a "testimony" which maintained intact the historic faith of Christendom as set forth in the Creeds. It was agreed that there must be unfettered freedom of inquiry. There must be liberty of individual judgment with regard to secondary matters which did not enter into the substance of the Christian faith. But though modern science and criticism had altered the colour, it had not altered the texture. The Broad Church movement fulfilled its function when it emancipated Scotland from the sterile dogmatism into which Evangelicalism had congealed. In its wake came a very different spirit, intent primarily on declaring its allegiance to the Catholic faith.

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The problem, therefore, was to express the faith of the Church in such a fashion as to find room for the liberty, which the Broad Churchmen had won, within a Church which remained true to its Reformation traditions and to the Catholic faith. The three sections of the Scottish Church found themselves moving along parallel paths; and though ecclesiastical jealousies were slow to yield, they thawed somewhat as the churches became deeply engrossed in the work of re-adjusting their relations to the Westminster Confession. Where opinions were fluid, it was impossible to obtain the conditions under which alone a new Confession could be composed; and the Confession accordingly retained its place as the historic standard of the Church. But it was recognised that the primary authority lay with the Scriptures, and that the Church must not allow itself to be bound to the Confession in such a manner as to be unable to appeal from man-devised documents to the Word of God. The method adopted accordingly was to deal, not with the Confession itself, but with the documents which described the Church's relation to the Confession.

The United Presbyterians, like true children of the Relief, led the way in 1879 with a Declaratory Act which softened many asperities of the Confession without affecting its substance. The Free Church took a similar step in 1892. The Free Church, however, was more rigid than the United Presbyterian. Internal divisions were therefore sharper, and various causes combined to bring about strong divergences of opinion. The Highland section remained steadfastly faithful to the teachings of Disruption times, and regarded the endeavour to meet the needs of the times as apostasy. Changes in ecclesiastical policy, changes in ritual, changes in methods of work all helped to estrange the

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Highland mind; and the antagonism came to a head over the Declaratory Act. A considerable secession took place in the far north. Many, who sympathised with the seceders, remained in the Free Church, but refused henceforward to support the leaders of the Church. Both the United Presbyterians and the Free Church held that it lay within the sphere of the Church's independence to alter its subordinate standards as often as it found it necessary to do so. But the Westminster Confession formed part of the constitution of the churches; and within the Free Church, always much exercised over its relations with the civil magistrate, many had grave doubt as to how it would fare with the Church in the law courts if such a proceeding as the Declaratory Act were challenged by a dissatisfied minority. The test of the law was, however, not applied yet.

As the Westminster Confession formed part of the Revolution Settlement of 1690, the Church of Scotland could alter its relation to it only by an alteration in the concordat with the State. The situation was complicated by the Disestablishment agitation, to which reference will be made later; and any attempt to obtain a modification of the Act of 1690 was practically impossible in the political circumstances of the period. The Church stated its relation to the Confession in a formula which all ministers had to sign as "the confession of my faith"; but the formula, like the Confession, was embodied in an Act of Parliament,<sup>1</sup> and could not be altered by ecclesiastical action alone. In the case of elders no question of statute law arose; and a modified formula was drawn up for them. The matter

<sup>1</sup> This Act, passed in 1693, was not a necessary part of the Revolution Settlement. It was sought by the Church as a defence against Episcopalian intrigue.



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came up time and again in the General Assembly: but always the political difficulty barred the way. The desire was to remain true to the "grand mysteries of the Gospel" and at the same time to relieve individuals from "unnecessary burdens as to forms of expression and matters which do not enter into the substance of the faith." In 1903, by which time the Disestablishment agitation was dead, a declaratory resolution was carried in the General Assembly. The opportunity came in 1905, when legislation became necessary in the interests of the Free Church for reasons which will be indicated later. The Church of Scotland secured a clause which amended the Act of 1693; and in 1910 after much discussion a new formula was drawn up by the General Assembly, in which ministers bound themselves to "the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession."

After the Disruption both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church continued the missionary work which had taken shape under the Evangelical ascendancy. The undivided Church had set in operation five schemes — Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Colonial Missions, Missions to the Jews and Education—enterprises which could be carried on only through the efforts of the whole Church. Both Churches continued the schemes; and from that date the General Assemblies spent more and more of their time on them. The main activities of the Churches fell into the hands of large standing committees operating under the authority of the General Assemblies; and by the end of the century committee work grew to a scale which threatened the liberties of church courts and individuals. Among the schemes the Foreign Mission early became the most important. Both branches of the divided Church were confronted with great practical

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difficulties as the result of the Disruption. The whole body of missionaries, with one exception, threw in their lot with the Free Church, so that the Church of Scotland had equipment without personnel, and the Free Church personnel without equipment. At first the rivalries of home repeated themselves in the mission field; but the vastness of the non-Christian world made it impossible for these to continue. The United Presbyterian Church, which had not the same burden at home as the other Churches, organised great missions abroad. The wonderful achievements of David Livingstone in Africa appealed to the enthusiasm of the churches with a force which marks an epoch in the history of missions. One region was opened up after another, and missionary policy grew bolder. It is not yet easy to estimate the reaction of the work in heathen lands on the Church at home. To the historian of the future, the rise of the missionary movement will possibly appear the most important factor in the church history of the nineteenth century. The century saw a vast expansion in the British Empire; and with that expansion the progress of missions kept pace. The widened outlook, the increasing scale of operations, the stimulus of enterprise, the growing consciousness of the supreme necessity of work among the heathen combined to weaken denominational jealousies and to restore something of the lost spirit of catholicity and Christian unity. The split in the Church at Lethendy or Marnoch, or a congregational battle over an organ, seemed a trifling matter to those who had learned to carry their thoughts and their prayers to the Ganges or the Zambesi.

In their work at home both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church continued to follow in the footsteps of Chalmers. Both regarded their mission as national. The methods of both conformed broadly to

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the same type. Both set themselves to cover the whole of Scotland; and each proceeded on the assumption that no account should be taken of the activities of the other. In 1844 an Act of Parliament made possible what the ill-fated Chapel Act had failed to do. Where a church had been opened free of debt, and a capital sum had been provided to endow a stipend of not less than £120, a new ecclesiastical parish might be created with precisely the same position in the organisation of the Church as an old parish. By this means the Church of Scotland was enabled to meet the necessities of remote districts and of the growing towns and villages. The hero of the Endowment Scheme was Robertson of Ellon, afterwards of Edinburgh, the most formidable debater in the Moderate party before the Disruption. To this cause he devoted himself with unremitting enthusiasm; and if the Church of Scotland recovered quickly from the Disruption, it was due in great measure to the work of Robertson. He built upon the foundations laid by Chalmers in his Church Extension campaign; and like Chalmers he insisted on the territorial or parochial system as the only method by which the Church of Scotland could carry out effectively its mission to the Scottish people. The work of Robertson was continued by his successors; and in eighty years the Church of Scotland added nearly six hundred parishes to its system. Among these were some of its greatest congregations. Meanwhile the Free Church pursued with great energy a similar task with the aim of planting her standard in every parish. The Free Church, however, did not adopt a policy of endowment. It preferred to rely upon the Sustentation Fund. No sort of co-operation was, of course, possible between the two churches. On the contrary there was relentless competition. The scorn of the Disruption

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period was succeeded by the angry spirit of the Disestablishment campaign; and not until the twentieth century was a happier spirit possible.

Side by side with the Extension movement, and building like it upon the parochial system, was the social and missionary work in the cities, of which the most famous example was the ministry of Norman Macleod in the Barony parish of Glasgow. Other notable episodes were the evangelistic enterprise in the Wynds of Glasgow, led by Dr. Robert Buchanan of the Free Tron Church, Glasgow, among the squalid alleys which had almost broken the heart of Chalmers, and the historic ministry of Dr. John Macleod in the huge parish of Govan. But the most creative achievement was the many-sided Life and Work movement, initiated and guided by Professor Charteris of Edinburgh. Following in the footsteps of Chalmers and Norman Macleod,<sup>2</sup> he extended to the whole Church of Scotland the ideas which they had made operative in their parishes; and from the Church of Scotland the influence spread to the other churches. The root principle of Life and Work was to organise the activity of voluntary workers. The Church was not to be merely a body of worshippers and hearers, but an army of workers also. In a hundred different ways the members of the Church

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible in this brief epilogue to do more than glance at Norman Macleod, next to Chalmers the greatest Scottish churchman of his century. Neither a scholar, nor an ecclesiastic, he was, like Chalmers, a man of large heart and striking personality that made him the beloved friend and counsellor both of Queen Victoria and of the poor in the slums of the Barony parish. His magazine *Good Words* marked an epoch in periodical literature. He helped to break down the rigid Sabbatarianism of his day. He left his mark on all the work of the Church—on Foreign Missions and on Home Missions—on the methods of parochial ministry—on the care of the poor—on the pulpit. He was on the side of everything that made for breadth, freedom and humanity; and in a period of bitter sectarianism he spoke of the need for the reunion of the Church in Scotland. His influence on his times was due not to any system which he organised or to any policy which he advocated, but to the sheer large-heartedness of a profoundly religious nature. He died in 1872.

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were stimulated to take part in religious, social and philanthropic enterprises. Life and Work made itself felt in every department of the Church at home and abroad; and as the nineteenth century wore to its close, its repercussions might be felt in many regions of national life which had no apparent connection with the Church.

Patronage was a battlefield of the Ten Years' Conflict; and after the split in the Church, the Church of Scotland had to deal with it without the help of those who had felt its pressure most keenly. In 1843, a few months after the Disruption, the Scottish Benefices Act became law. This was the measure which the Government had in view when it rejected Campbell of Monzie's Bill. It was Lord Aberdeen's Bill in much the same form as when it was angrily refused by the Non-intrusionists in 1840. A presbytery might consider objections other than those against a presentee's "life" or "doctrine." It might take account not merely of the substance of the objections but also of the number and character of the objectors; and the objections had to be not only stated but proved judicially. The Act brought little satisfaction. In parish after parish the settlement of a presentee brought a flood of objections, often trivial; and much time and money were wasted on long legal processes at the bar of the ecclesiastical courts. It soon became clear that the only way out of a situation, which was injuring greatly the peace of the Church, was to get rid of patronage altogether. Within ten years of the Disruption a movement to abolish patronage began to take shape. Like all such movements, it had many phases before it bore fruit in a concrete result; and throughout it was opposed by many who were by no means of the Moderate type. But the most living school of churchmanship in the Church of

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Scotland was on the whole on its side. Robertson of Ellon, Robert Lee, Norman Macleod, all the most progressive and vital elements in the Church, saw that, if the Church was to retain its place in the life of the nation, it must free itself from the burden of patronage.

Meanwhile the Free Church was finding that it also could not remain immovably where it had stood at the Disruption. "Though we quit the Establishment," Chalmers had said, "we go out on the Establishment principle. We quit a vitiated Establishment, and would rejoice in returning to a pure one. To express it otherwise, we are the advocates for a national recognition and national support of religion; and we are not Voluntaries." No statement could be more emphatic. How far Chalmers had thought out the practical implications of his words, it is difficult to say; but the position held by an appreciable proportion of the Free Church was that, if the State did what it ought to do, it would overturn the existing Establishment as a corrupt institution, and establish in its place the Free Church. To such men no sort of *rapprochement* with the Church of Scotland was thinkable. It was Erastian; and with it, or with individuals belonging to it, they would not co-operate in anything. To these men, however, contact with the Voluntaries was equally distasteful. Nevertheless, as a tripartite division is rarely permanent, the Free Church gravitated<sup>3</sup> towards the United Presbyterian Church; and in 1863, under the leadership of Candlish and Buchanan, negotiations were opened for a union of the two churches.

The negotiations progressed satisfactorily for a few

<sup>3</sup> In 1852 the Free Church absorbed the majority of the Old Light Antiburghers. The Old Light Burghers, it may be recalled, reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1839: but most of them "came out" in 1843.

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years; but in the meantime the anti-patronage movement in the Church of Scotland had advanced so rapidly that the more conservative wing of the Free Church began to dream of a healing of the Disruption as preferable to a union with the Voluntaries. They did not relish closer relations with the United Presbyterian Church. The United Presbyterians stood for disestablishment; and disestablishment was not in harmony with the *Claim of Right*. The opposition to union was led by Dr. James Begg, a powerful personality, coarse of texture, with gifts of leadership and popular appeal, who had already played a great part in social and philanthropic work; and he had the support of a considerable and determined minority, including almost the whole Highland section of the Free Church. Begg and some of his party were in touch unofficially with certain representative men in the Church of Scotland—chiefly Charteris—who had begun steadfastly to contemplate the healing of the divisions of the Scottish Church. In 1869 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland declared for the abolition of patronage. Thereafter Begg pressed harder than ever his opposition to union with the United Presbyterians. He stood, as Chalmers stood, for the Establishment principle: and he would make no terms with Voluntarism. It became clear that if negotiations were continued, there would be a split in the Free Church and an appeal to Caesar. The anti-unionists would go to law on the plea that in uniting with a Voluntary church the Free Church was deserting its constitutional principles. The danger of a defeat in the law courts was too real for the unionists; and in 1873 the negotiations with the United Presbyterians were broken off. The Cameronian or Reformed Presbyterian Church had joined in the conferences on

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union; and in the end the larger part of it was absorbed into the Free Church.

In 1874 patronage was abolished. Thus came to an end a system which had perplexed the Church of Scotland since 1712. When the Church made its first approach to the Government with a view to the abolition of patronage, it was rebuffed by Gladstone, then Prime Minister; but what was refused by a Liberal Government was quickly obtained when the Conservatives under Disraeli succeeded to power. The duty of electing a parish minister was now laid upon the congregation; and the courts of the Church were declared to be the final judges in all matters connected with the election. There were some in the Church of Scotland, and some in the Free Church, who thought (or feared) that the abolition of patronage might lead to the "return" of many who had hitherto been in the Free Church. Such thoughts and fears were vain. Thirty years had given time for loyalties and interests to arise in the Free Church, as they arise in every institution; and no satisfactory result could have been expected from any process of attrition which detached individuals from either side. The abolition of patronage had removed a practical grievance; but it did not touch the problem set by the Disruption.

The abolition of patronage was followed by a long and passionate campaign for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of Scotland. In part this was an echo of the parallel movement in England, which had already disestablished the Church of Ireland, and had designs against the Church of England. In part, it was due to a certain dismay at the recovery of the Church of Scotland from the Disruption; for by 1870 there could be no doubt that there had been a recovery. At a later date Disestablishment was urged



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on the ground that it might open the way for re-union; but in the earlier period it was fired by the hope of striking a decisive blow at a successful rival. "The Established Churches of the country," said Principal Rainy, the ablest, subtlest, and most relentless of the champions of Disestablishment, "are an obstruction to good as Establishments and a furtherance to evil." Year by year the General Assembly of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Synod called for Disestablishment by huge majorities. The motive was political as well as ecclesiastical; and there was good ground for hoping that the Liberal Party would find room for Scottish Disestablishment in its programme. The critical period came in the early "eighties." The Liberals had returned to power with a great majority, and Scotland was represented by an almost solid block of Liberals, including Gladstone, the leader of the party, whom the Scottish Liberals regarded with extraordinary devotion. But in 1885 Gladstone, speaking at Edinburgh, declared that Disestablishment was "not at the door, but at the end of a long vista." Next year the question of Home Rule for Ireland altered the orientation of political parties; and the Disestablishment agitation steadily became less formidable. It flared up again for a moment with a Liberal victory in 1892; but by the end of the century it was dead.

The challenge of Disestablishment was taken up with hearty goodwill by the Church of Scotland. A vigorous Church Defence movement was organised with such success that it became clear to the politicians that no political capital was to be won by an attack on the Church. Disestablishment seemed like an endeavour to destroy the Church of Scotland; and the representative leaders of Disestablishment said nothing to dispel that.

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opinion. All that was best and most vital in the Church of Scotland was so closely intertwined with her position as the national church that Disestablishment could have been carried only at the cost of breaking up for ever the Presbyterianism of Scotland. In the eyes of the most living section of the Church of Scotland Presbyterianism was a secondary thing, not to be compared for a moment with so essential a principle as the national recognition of religion. "We must stand somewhere," said Principal Tulloch, "we stand here. We cannot give up the principle of National Religion or parley with assaults on that principle. Presbyterianism is dear to us . . . but it is not more valuable or more a principle of the historic Church of Scotland than that of National Religion—that the Lord whom we serve is Head and King of nations as well as of churches, and a National Church is the only true expression of the homage which nations owe the Supreme Head."

The Church of Scotland declared on many occasions that the true policy was not Disestablishment but Union. So said many representative speakers, and so the General Assembly stated in official communications to the other churches. The invitations to conference were always declined. The Church of Scotland was not prepared to consider any terms which involved Disestablishment; the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church were not prepared to consider anything else. The question of Church and State was not the only cause for separation. There was a difference of temperament as well as of policy; and there was not yet on either side any great knowledge of the mind and thought of the other. Nevertheless, the idea was gaining ground that the division of the Scottish Church ought not to be allowed to continue for ever; but it

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grew very slowly. In 1894 a proposal was carried in the General Assembly of the Free Church to open again the negotiations for union with the United Presbyterians. A motion to include the Church of Scotland also in the negotiations received very scant support. It was brushed aside somewhat impatiently by Rainy, the leader of the Free Church, as "not a practical proposal." The Church of Scotland was similarly reluctant, as it showed a year later when it rejected a proposal to unite with the other churches in compiling a new hymn book.<sup>4</sup>

In 1900 the United Presbyterian Church coalesced with the majority of the Free Church to form the United Free Church. Under the leadership of Rainy, the Free Church had now departed completely from the Establishment principle which it had stated so emphatically sixty years earlier, and had gone over to Voluntaryism; and the formation of the United Free Church thus seemed to close the door finally on all hopes of a comprehensive union which should include the Church of Scotland. The Free Church, however, did not go into the union without a split. The minority, who had succeeded in preventing union in 1873, was now so far reduced in numbers that many supposed it to be negligible. Its strength was chiefly in the Northern Highlands; and there it proved to be no minority, but a very considerable majority. Like those who had seceded over the Declaratory Act of 1892, it stood immovably by Disruption doctrine. In its eyes Voluntaryism was sheer "godlessness"; and it declared that by uniting with a Voluntary body such as the United Presbyterians the Free Church had departed

<sup>4</sup> In the following year this decision was reversed, and the Church of Scotland thenceforward joined in the preparation of the *Church Hymnary*.

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so far from its own fundamental principle as to sacrifice its identity. Though it had taken no part in the secession of 1892, it looked upon the Declaratory Act of that year as a dangerous and unwarrantable departure from doctrines which were part of the very constitution of the Free Church. It declined to go into the union; and within a few months it appealed to Caesar on the plea that it, and not the thirty-fold greater majority which had become part of the United Free Church, represented the Free Church of 1843. The case had to be fought through all the courts of law; and in 1904 the House of Lords gave judgment in favour of the minority.

The judgment took no one by surprise who had knowledge of the law by which the case was determined. The United Free Church received it with a shout of anger. Throughout the Church of Scotland the feeling was somewhat different. The decision was the first incident which made it possible to think that after all the wound of the Disruption might be healed — a hope which had somewhat faded at the union of 1900. It showed that the control of the civil magistrate could be as weighty in a non-established church as in an established. The Free Church, like all other non-established churches, held its name and its possessions under the law of trusts; and it could not by its own act modify or alter the original terms of the trust, except in so far as those terms included powers to change. The age-long problem of securing the autonomy of the Church against the control or interference of the secular authority was not solved by separating from the establishment and creating a non-established church; and Disestablishment therefore offered no real solution of a considerable problem. During the Disestablishment campaign the Church of Scotland had often been

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taunted with being in bondage to Caesar; and controversial orators loved to speak of the riveting of fetters and the clanking of chains. The reply always was that within the modern state the only method, by which the native autonomy of the Church can be freely exercised, is a concordat between Church and State, and that in consequence of its concordat the Church of Scotland in point of fact possessed and made use of a freedom which had never existed in the Free Church. If the freedom of the Church implies liberty to move without incurring temporal penalties, that freedom could not be found under the law of trusts; and the decision of 1904 showed that.

The decision, however, was one thing; the results of the decision were another. It dislocated an immense mass of property; and there was general approval for an Act of Parliament which, without altering the decision of the courts or the law upon which that decision rested, allocated the possessions of the Free Church equitably between the contending factions. At the same time the United Free Church embodied its principles in an Act of Assembly (1905), which declared the right of "this Church to alter, change, add to or modify her constitution and laws, subordinate standards and formulas, and to determine and declare what these are, and to unite with other Christian churches." This right, it was asserted, was part of the inherent liberty of the Church of Christ; and the procedure of carrying through any change, and the duty of judging whether the change was in conformity with the Word of God or with the traditions which determined the identity of the Church, were entirely within the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts. This Act of Assembly was a landmark of some importance. It had its root in a conception of Christian doctrine

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which had taken shape during the nineteenth century. Formerly it was thought an impossible thing that the doctrinal testimony of a church should change. But the nineteenth century taught two things. It taught that there must always be a distinction between the primary, fundamental, necessary truths of the Christian religion and the inferences, minutiae or local details which by one process or another had sprung from those truths. It taught also that even with regard to the fundamentals the forms and expressions of one period were not necessarily the forms and expressions of another. Much of the old phraseology had become meaningless; and on many sides a demand was arising for "restatement." These things created the atmosphere which made the Act of 1905 possible and necessary.

For some years the General Assembly of the United Free Church continued the custom of its component parts of passing annually a resolution demanding the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of Scotland; and the return of a Liberal Government with an overwhelming majority in 1906 gave new hopes to the more ardent members of the Disestablishment party. But in truth their cause was dead. Other events and tendencies were on the side of ecclesiastical peace; and the decision of 1904 had made a new situation. It became clear that a way was opening up for negotiations for union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church. The first step was not taken without much hesitation; for the scars of the Disestablishment conflict were still smarting. That step was taken in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1907. The United Free Church met the advances of her neighbour with a reply which showed that a new spirit was guiding her councils. In

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1909 official representatives of the two Churches met in conference to consider the ecclesiastical situation. The conference continued for exactly twenty years, and ended in the Union of the Churches.

The driving force behind the conference, however, was the religious condition of the nation. The sheer necessities of the times prevented the conference from losing its way in the jungle of ecclesiastical disputation. Since the Disruption the balance of the population of Scotland had shifted. More than half was gathered in the valleys of the Forth and Clyde; and Glasgow alone contained more than a quarter. But the distribution of churches and clergy was much as it had been in 1843; and the resources of both Churches had been much dissipated in religious competition. Where the population was scanty, churches and clergy were most numerous; in the dense population of the industrial region churches were badly under-manned. The authority of the Church in society was no longer what it had been; and though such reports are always exaggerated, there were signs of a grave falling away of the people from the Church, especially in the industrial regions, a decrease in church attendance, a decline in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes. In Glasgow and the industrial regions there was a great growth of Romanism, due to the influx of Irish and the multiplying of their descendants. It was a period of severe strain in the industrial world, when one great strike succeeded another. Political strife was sharper and bitterer than had been known in Great Britain for centuries; and civil war seemed to be brewing in Ireland. In such times there was no living interest in the quarrels of the Scottish Churches. That interest lessened still further during the Great War; and the circumstances of the War, both at home and in the

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field, increased the habit of co-operation and removed much of the old jealousy.

As the conference proceeded, it became clear that, in spite of antagonism and estrangement, both Churches had always cherished the same ideals. Both stood for the National Recognition of Religion; both believed that in all things spiritual the Church of Christ possessed a right of self-government which ought not to be subject to the control of any secular authority. The Church of Scotland held that it possessed this freedom, and that the establishment of the Church was a defence against the interference of the civil magistrate; but the United Free Church pointed to certain elements in the existing establishment which seemed to infer a different conclusion. At the same time it became manifest that the old categories of establishment and disestablishment were inadequate. Some new method must be found. In 1912 a Memorandum, put forward by the Church of Scotland, outlined a process of legislation which might bring about the desired result. As the fruit of the Memorandum, a series of Articles was drawn up which declared the constitution of the Church of Scotland in matters spiritual; and in 1921 an Act of Parliament gave statutory ratification to them.

The Articles answered the question which had been left unanswered in 1690. The life of the Church was no longer regarded as depending upon King or nation or any other embodiment of temporal sovereignty. It flowed immediately from Christ, the living King and Head of the Church. The Articles claimed for the Church courts final authority, legislative and judicial, in all matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline. Other Articles spoke of the State as an ordinance of God, and recognised the duty of the



Church to seek unity with other Christian churches. Another Article stated the right of the Church on its own initiative to interpret or alter the Articles. One Article, however, was declared to be unalterable, and essential to the continuity and corporate life of the Church—Article I, in which the Church was described as holding the Catholic Faith and adhering to the Scottish Reformation. The Articles and the Act embodying them form a landmark in the church history of Western Europe. The National Church, which Reformation thought regarded as an outcrop of national life, was now regarded as the local representative of a catholic or universal institution; and the Act of 1921 may yet provide for other churches and nations a model which will enable a church to be at once National, Catholic, and Free.

There remained the complicated question of the Endowments of the Church of Scotland. Now that the relation between Church and State had been settled, the Endowments ceased to be a cause of division between the Churches. The Endowments of the Church of Scotland were the small portion of the Patrimony of the Kirk which had remained to the Church after the storms of the Reformation. That they belonged rightfully to the Church had been held by every representative churchman since the days of Knox; "our own bread," said Chalmers. So far as they arose from the teind or tithe, they were governed by an Act of 1629; and in the course of three centuries the Act had become very cumbrous in its working and had given rise to many inequalities. On the heels of a Royal Commission came the far-reaching Act of 1925. It gave effect to the principle for which the Church of Scotland had always stood—that the Endowments, being the Patrimony of the Kirk, ought not to be

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secularised, but should be used in the service of religion, and particularly for the maintenance of ordinances in every parish of Scotland by means of a territorial ministry. The Act brought to an end the system by which stipends derived from the teind fluctuated with the price of home-grown grain, and it provided for a fixed money payment. The Endowments had hitherto been held parochially in such a fashion that they were available only for the parish of origin; but the Act put them in the hands of a board of General Trustees. Changing conditions might make it necessary for the Church to alter the spheres of labour of its clergy by combining or subdividing parishes; and the Act, while recognising that a parish had the first claim on its teind, provided that the teind should no longer be bound exclusively to the soil of its own parish, and might be available for the "neighbourhood." The Act of 1925 has altered altogether the economic framework of the Church of Scotland; and it remains to be seen what difference it will cause in the life of the Church. The danger which lies ahead is the rise of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy.

With the Acts of 1921 and 1925, all obstacles to the reunion of the Church were removed. By this time the public opinion of both branches of the Church was almost completely in favour of union. A small section of the United Free Church decided to stand aloof; for it held strongly to Voluntaryism and was not prepared to compromise. For the rest, nothing remained but to carry out as expeditiously as possible the practical business details. On October 2, 1929, the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church were convened separately for the last time. Proceeding from their Assembly Halls to S. Giles' Cathedral, they joined in a memorable service of

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thanksgiving; and in the afternoon of that day, the children of the Secession and the Disruption joined with the children of the Moderates to form together the first General Assembly of the re-united Church of Scotland.

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